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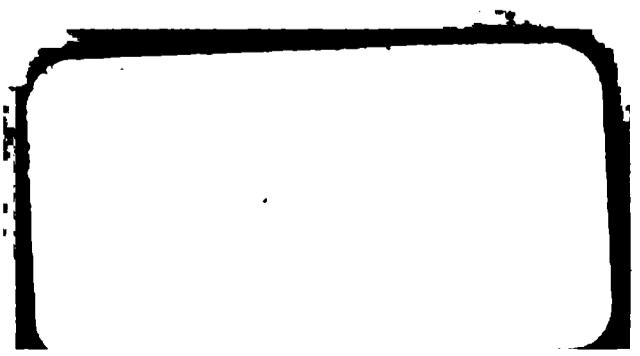
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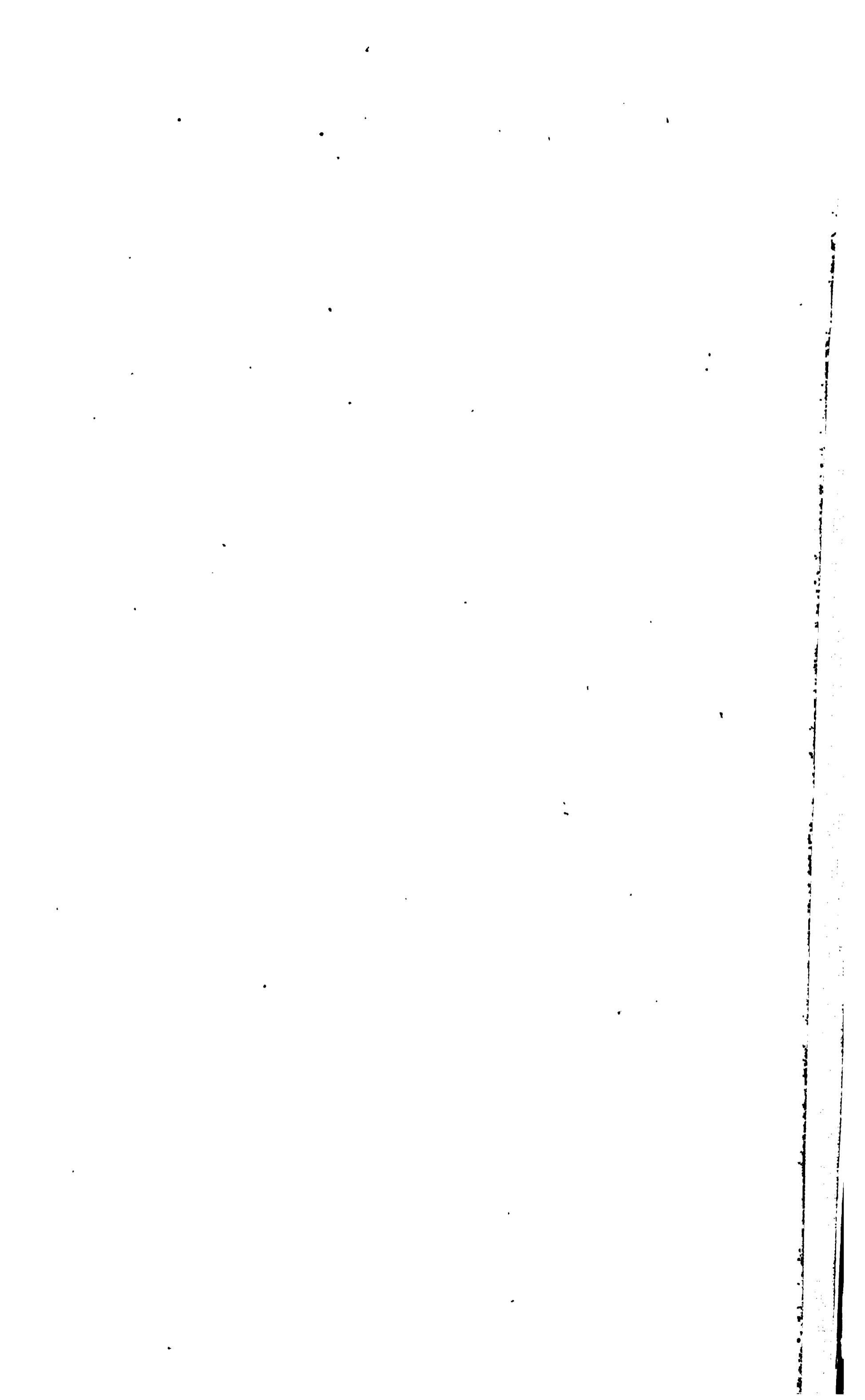
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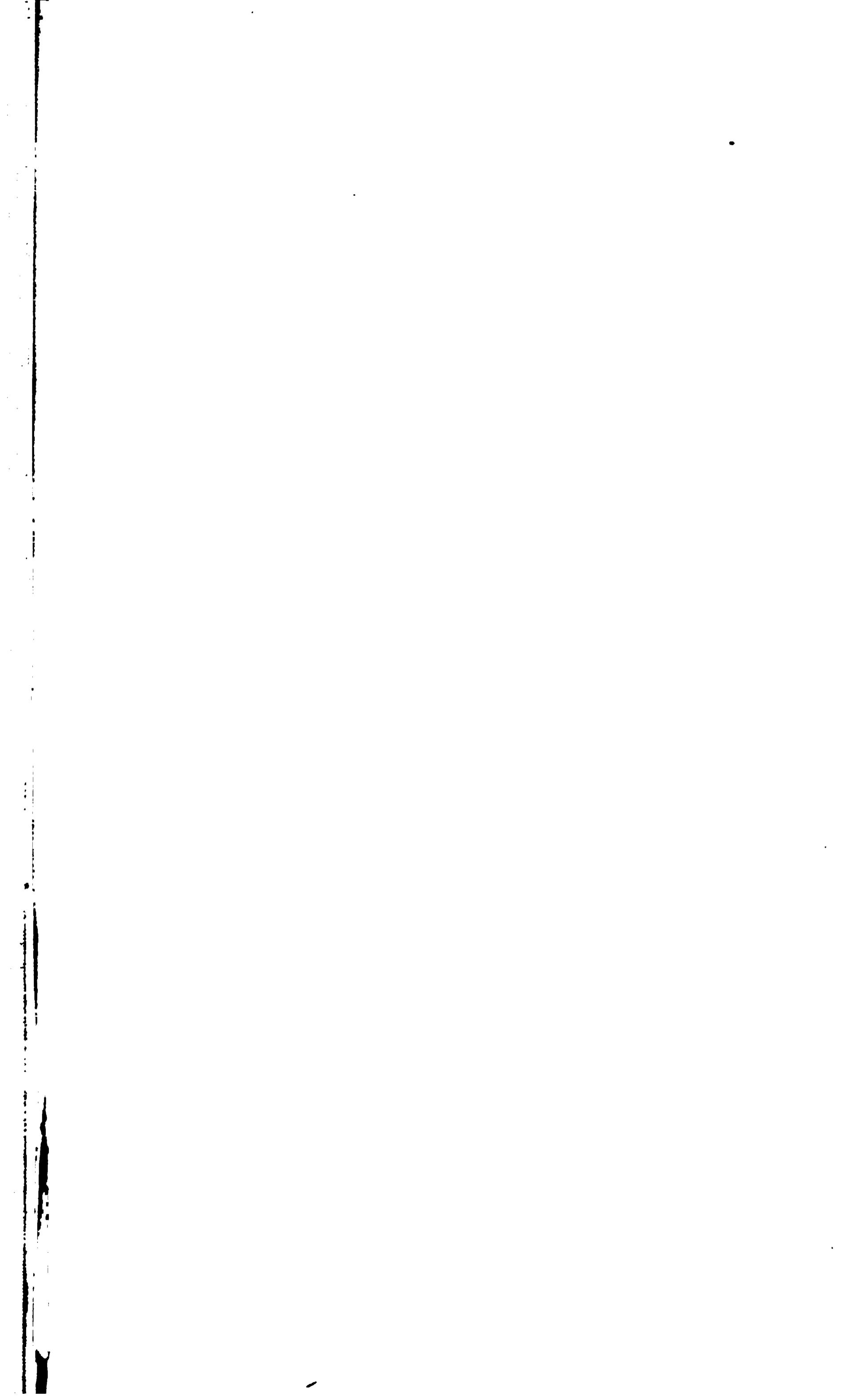
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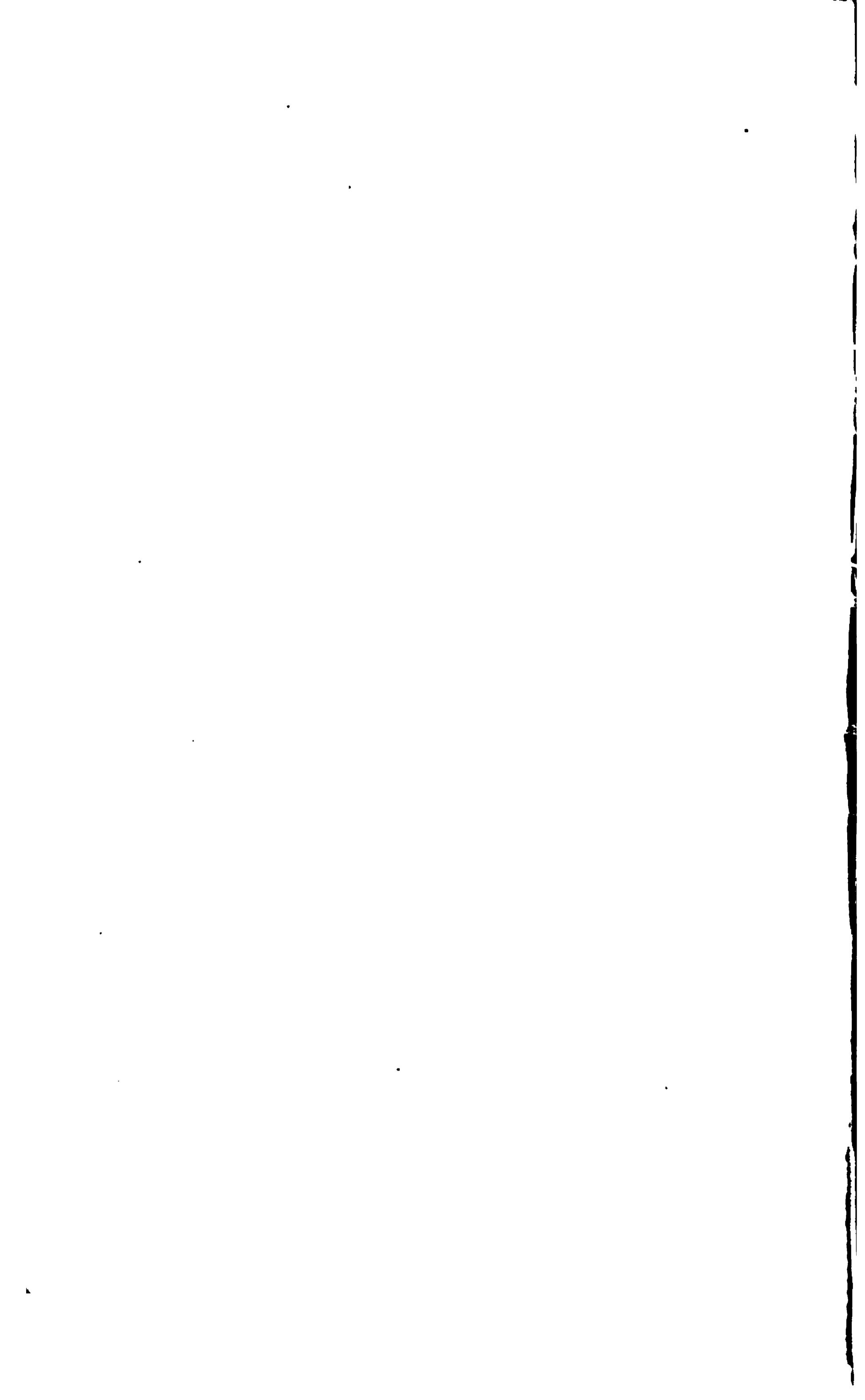
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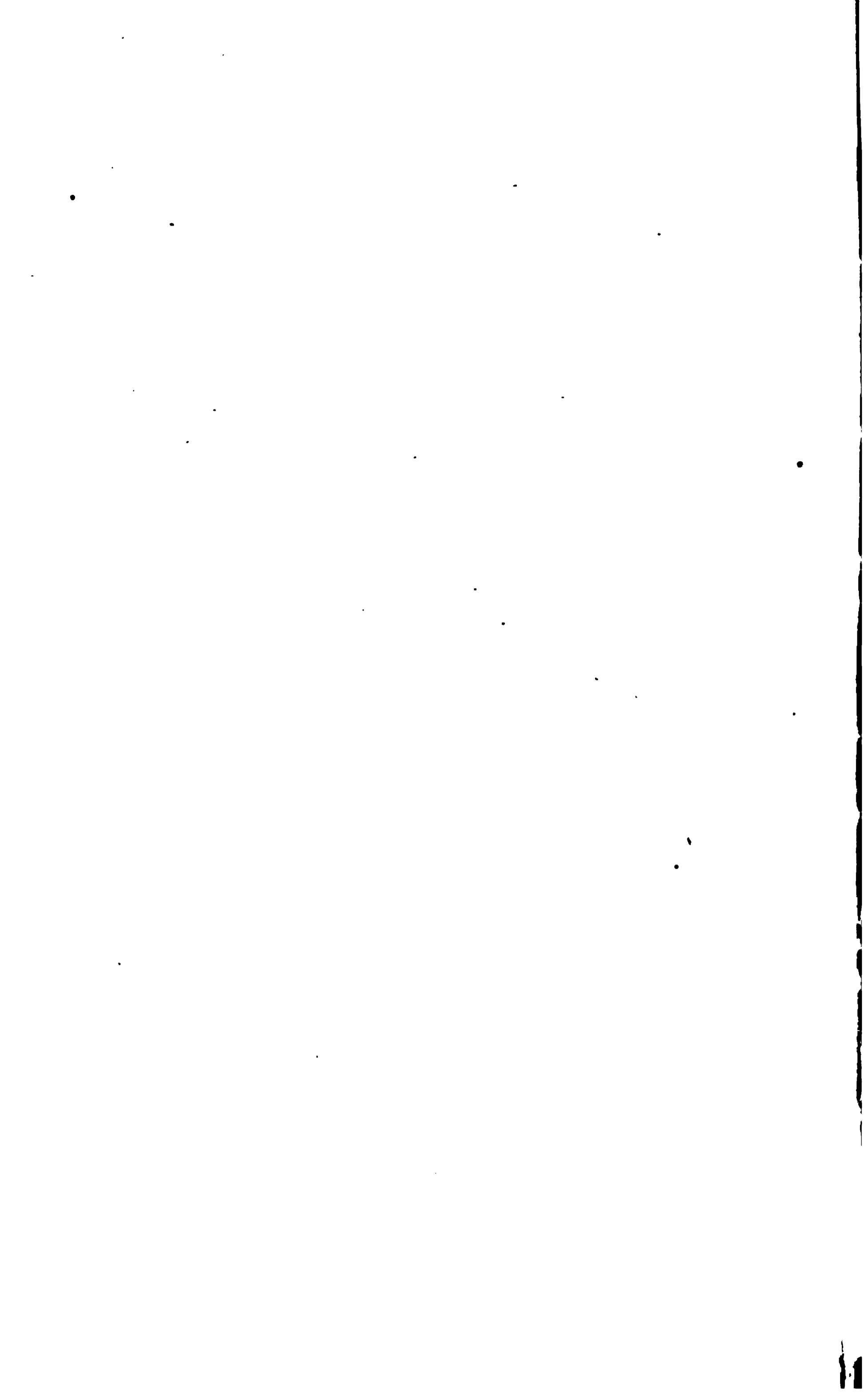








LIFE AND TIMES
OR
EDMUND BURKE.



HISTORY
OF
THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
EDMUND BURKE.

BY
THOMAS MACKNIGHT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI, M.P., A LITERARY AND POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY;'
AND 'THIRTY YEARS OF FOREIGN POLICY: A HISTORY OF THE SECRETARSHIPS
OF THE EARL OF ABERDEEN AND VISCOUNT PALMERSTON.'

"A man worthy to be held in remembrance, because he did not live for himself."—Burke's
Epitaph on Lord Rockingham.

VOLUME I.

LONDON :

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1858.

PRINTED BY
JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, LITTLE QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, LONDON.



380 VICTOR
M. JOHN
VOL. 2

PREFACE.

I HAVE endeavoured to illustrate both the public and private history of a great Statesman and Political Philosopher. I have ventured to supply some of that information about his memorable works which is necessary to render them fully intelligible to an age from whose manners and habits they are daily becoming more remote; and on the foundation which his admitted actions and writings afford, I have striven to construct an authentic and continuous narrative.

The difficulties in executing such a task with any degree of success, are very great. They will be most readily acknowledged by those who have given most attention to this subject; and they are such as those who have only cursorily surveyed Burke's life, can scarcely estimate. Without wishing in any degree to depreciate the labours of my predecessors, to all of whom I most unfeignedly admit many obligations, I believe it will be candidly allowed, that, from the scope of the design, and the manner in which it has been

attempted to present in one view the different private and public events which distinguished the career of so eminent a speculative philosopher and practical politician, there is between this Work, and any existing biography of Burke, very little in common.

In truth, the political life of Burke, as illustrated by the times in which he lived, has hitherto not been even faintly sketched. Yet it may be said more emphatically of his career than that of any other author or politician, that it is impossible to separate the private history and works of the man from his times; for, more than almost any other individual, he lived intensely and fervently among the events of his generation. With such rare powers for vivifying the past, it was the present as it might influence the future, and the past only as it might illuminate the present, that peculiarly occupied his attention. He was no dreamer. He was no recluse. Above all, he was no mere man of letters, thinking of what was to be written, and not of what was to be done. It was from the active world as it was stirring around him, that his eloquence derived its inspiration and his wisdom received its application. Hence his times, as they influenced him, and as he influenced them, form so important and indispensable a foreground to any satisfactory delineation of his individual character, or any intelligible estimate of his imperishable works. Separately they illustrate one another, though it is only when they are associated together that they form a complete and instructive whole.

But while thus widening the canvas, and taking into it the objects more immediately surrounding Burke, I trust it will appear that I have not neglected the details of his individual portrait. An able writer in *The Athénæum*, three years ago, called the attention of the public to the numerous errors respecting Burke's private history, which had been frequently repeated, the unsatisfactory nature of the works on his life, the necessity of a renewed investigation and a more comprehensive criticism. When those articles were published, I had already made considerable progress with this Work, and had independently adopted some of that excellent critic's conclusions, though I could not but respectfully dissent from others. I had written in the November and December numbers of *Fraser's Magazine* for 1851, two papers on Burke's career; and it was during the composition of those essays that I was first struck with the necessity of subjecting the ordinary narratives of his life to a careful analysis. My rule was and has been to accept as far as possible no statement at second-hand; but to inspect documents, to examine dates, and by always taking Burke's own account of facts as the groundwork for all deductions, to separate truth from error. At every step, while following his progress year after year, I found matter for surprise. I found that many particulars, which had been accepted as some of the most remarkable circumstances of his private history, were either totally unfounded or much misapprehended. It is, for instance, a cherished anecdote that Burke, with

Hume, had been a candidate for the Chair of Logic at Glasgow; and that they were both rejected, while a Mr. James Clow, of whom nothing is now remembered, was chosen. On considering this report, which has been so generally received, and the circumstances which must have attended such an election, I began to look upon the statement as altogether fabulous. But in this instance as in others, when assailing prepossessions which had long been rooted in the mind, it was necessary to present the evidence and the reasons in detail, to carefully give references for important facts, and to carry the reader with me in every conclusion. Though this examination may give to portions of this Work a rather critical character, and occasionally interfere with the progress of the biographical narrative, for the sake of truth and candour this disadvantage ought perhaps to be incurred; because it would, under the circumstances, be impossible to write a satisfactory work on the Life and Times of Burke which should not, in a certain degree, be critical as well as biographical.

But it is more agreeable to the mind to build up than to pull down. I have never experienced a more real pleasure than when I discovered the original autobiography of Joseph Emin, the Armenian, containing so graphic a sketch of Burke at a time when we know least of him, and so impressive a testimony of his kindness to the destitute and the wretched. It will be seen how much more characteristic and affecting this incident is in the real narrative by Emin himself, than

in the mere extract from it in Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones, which is all that has hitherto been given by writers, who appear to have been unaware of the existence of this curious autobiography, and of the many touches so honourable to Burke which have been omitted in the quotation.

In the more political portion of these volumes, I cannot justly charge myself with having neglected any available means of information. I have carefully collated the different published papers which have recently shed such a flood of light on the men and measures of the earlier part of George the Third's reign. I have used extensively that portion of the Cavendish debates which are now published, and spent much time and pains in deciphering the volumes which still remain in manuscript.

The historical section of the Annual Register was for many years written by Burke. After having carefully thought over the subject, I have no hesitation in declaring that, from the commencement of that publication until at least the close of the American war, his guiding spirit may be distinctly traced in each volume. That every paragraph, or even every chapter, of those pages on contemporary history was his composition, it would be too much to affirm. That, however, what he did not write, he superintended, I think there can be no doubt. Throughout all that period, conscientiously impartial as the historian of the Annual Register might endeavour to be, the general impression he leaves upon the reader, is in favour of the course of policy which

the Rockingham party pursued, and which Burke is known to have recommended. Whether that party might be a small and unpopular minority, as in 1772, or supported by public opinion in Opposition or in Office, in 1766, 1780, and 1782, the view taken of affairs in the Annual Register is always that which Burke expressed in the House of Commons and in his acknowledged writings. It is indeed most curiously instructive, to compare his avowed sentiments in his speeches and letters with those of the anonymous critic and historian. The coincidences in style are numerous. The coincidences in principle and opinion are invariable. There are in these Annual Registers some vivid illustrations of debates which are unreported in every other periodical publication of that day. Information which could only come from one with Burke's opportunities of observation, is frequently supplied. The historical sketches, though hastily thrown off, and without receiving the polish of Burke's avowed compositions, are sometimes imbued with the loftiest attributes of his genius. From the nature of these fugitive productions, combined with his peculiar circumstances, it was impossible that his name, as the author of the historical portions of the Annual Register, could ever be proclaimed. But whoever might be given out as the anonymous writer, or whoever might receive the money in payment from Dodsley for these contributions, the general impression of Burke's contemporaries was, in my opinion, perfectly correct. He has, in those volumes, recorded

his own political campaigns with, in general, an abnegation of himself as proud and noble as that which distinguishes the Commentaries of the great Roman Warrior and Statesman on the wars he himself so gloriously conducted. The value, therefore, of the Annual Registers to one who should undertake to write Burke's political history, cannot be exaggerated. Yet they have hitherto been, for this purpose, but very little consulted.

The publication of Burke's Correspondence, in 1844, undoubtedly added the newest and most authentic materials for the illustration of his life. It is refreshing to contrast the earnestness, character, and vigour of those letters with the dry, diplomatic, and meagre effusions which have been published as the Correspondence of other great statesmen. But they are not in themselves, what the late Lord Fitzwilliam wished them to be considered, a History of Burke. Being the hasty productions of the moment on events as they were passing, they, like most letters of public men, require, before they can be thoroughly appreciated, ample illustration, that the reader may place himself in the situation of the writer at the time when each letter was written. Nothing however in the way of illustration was supplied but an occasional fact of no great importance. Even as a Correspondence, too, the collection is singularly incomplete. By determining only to publish the letters which they had in their possession, or which for that purpose were entrusted to them, the editors necessarily omitted many epistles of Burke quite as characteristic

and as authentic as any in their series. Not one of those letters to the Nagles, which give us so interesting a glimpse of Burke's conduct towards the Catholic members of his mother's family, will be found in the collection published by the lamented Earl Fitzwilliam and Sir Richard Bourke. Neither a complete edition of Burke's Correspondence, nor a complete edition of his Works, has yet been added to the literature of the country he adorned.

Burke's acknowledged writings I had studied diligently many years before I thought of writing anything on his career. They have ever appeared to me a treasure in English literature, only second in genius and worth to Shakespeare's Plays; and it is through the noble archway they afford, that all men must, as an indispensable condition, enter into the spirit of his life. Until we can raise ourselves to the elevation of his mind, and accustom ourselves to look at the events of his time through his own medium, any criticism on his character or political career can be of little worth. We may otherwise complacently remonstrate with him, rebuke him, wonder at him, and misjudge him; but we shall certainly not understand him.

The materials for forming a comprehensive judgment on his whole career, have perhaps never been presented in one view. It is an indisputable truth, that no sketch of his earlier political life, from his connection with Hamilton until the beginning of the American War, a period extending from 1759 to 1774, and embrac-

ing fifteen years, a period in which his character and habits were formed, and without comprehending which, any verdict on his later career must necessarily be very imperfect, has ever yet been fully drawn.

His early efforts in favour of Roman Catholic emancipation, his patriotic designs for the amelioration of Ireland, the circumstances attending his first Session in Parliament, his rapid rise to eminence as an orator and a statesman, his enunciation of the doctrines of free-trade, the obloquy and difficulties of every kind against which he had to contend, the beginning of his enmity to Chatham, his noble struggle against the Court in the Session of 1769 during the Middlesex elections, his unparalleled exertions in favour of the freedom of the press, his ideas on Indian reform in 1773, and his first expressed dislike of Warren Hastings, when in that year he was, under the Regulating Act, appointed Governor-General, are all subjects which do not yield in interest and magnitude to the events of his more advanced years. They are the foundation on which the majestic superstructure rests. But on all these matters, so indispensable in forming a correct idea of his political character and moral principles, little, almost nothing, has hitherto been said.

From the circumstances attending the close of his career, I think he has not yet met with justice from the world. His memory has suffered both from the injudicious censure and the injudicious panegyric of each of the great parties which have contended in the political

arena of England. That section of the Whig party which, since his death, has had the greatest influence on public opinion, having received its inspiration directly from Holland House, long steadily imbibed and as diligently inculcated through the medium of speeches and reviews, all the prejudices against Burke that their noble patron, the nephew and the pupil of Mr. Fox, undoubtedly entertained. So strong have been these prejudices, that the delusions they have perpetuated respecting Burke are such as have never before clouded the memory of any great man of sterling virtue and transcendent genius long after he had sunk into the grave, and become powerless to influence the political ambition either of friends or foes.

The whole spirit of his life has been misrepresented. His best and most disinterested efforts have been misunderstood or disparaged. Praises most justly his due, have been given to others ; and his services have been quietly passed over without either thanks or acknowledgment. I believe that the Whig party owe more to Burke than to any other man who ever enlisted himself in their ranks ; yet that was not the opinion of Lord Holland, nor is it, to all appearances, the opinion of an eminent Whig authority and respected statesman who is still, and it is to be hoped may long be, spared to enlighten the British Senate. While the last sheets of these volumes are passing through the press, I have seen with surprise, in the fourth volume of Fox's Memorials and Correspondence, that their noble editor claims for

Mr. Fox the undivided glory of originating and carrying on the struggle, first for conciliation and afterwards for peace with America, for Catholic Emancipation, for the freedom of the African, for maintaining the constitutional responsibility of the Government to Parliament, and, in fact, for nearly all the more distinguished social and political ameliorations that began to be agitated in his generation.* That in these great reforms, so far from being the originator, Fox was, as he himself publicly acknowledged, Burke's pupil; that they were, using Burke's own phrase on the same subject, "the distinguishing colours of his life"† much more than the peculiar characteristics of Fox's career, are considerations entirely passed over in the editor's concluding summary.

I am far from pretending to say anything against Fox's generous nature. I am far from presuming to censure here the noble editor of his Memoirs. The time however has, I believe, come, when the judgments passed upon Burke by heated partisans bitterly resenting his conduct on the French Revolution in his own day, and by those acting under similar influences in the generation immediately following, should be reconsidered. It is time that his acts should be impartially reviewed and his character calmly estimated. It is time that justice should be done.

Deeply sensible of their imperfections, painfully conscious of the deficiencies under which they have been

* Memorials and Correspondence of Fox, edited by Lord John Russell, vol. iv. pp. 489-491. † Speech at Bristol in 1780.

written, and of the difficulties which must remain perhaps scarcely overcome, I present, in all humility, to the Public these volumes as part of a History that I trust soon to render complete. They have been my consolation amid many sorrows. To endeavour, however feebly, to vindicate the memory of the noble spirits who have gone before us, is at all times an elevating and tranquillizing labour that will assuredly bring with it its own reward. What I have written I have written solely in the interests of truth and fairness. I have written in the spirit of love and reverence for a great and good man, whose character, the longer it is contemplated, will rise the more in esteem, and be more respected the more it shall be understood; a character which must ever be revered by those who delight in doing homage to human virtue, even though it should be mingled with that pardonable alloy of human infirmity inseparable from this our mortal condition.

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around them; and with the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty on the throne of the Three Kingdoms, for the Irish as a nation there seemed to be no future, no freedom, no prosperity. Yet it was in the saddest epoch in those sad five centuries of misgovernment and oppression, that a child, destined to be the mighty instrument in the emancipation of his country, and a great instructor of the world in the political philosophy of all ages, was born in the house of a solicitor on Arran Quay, Dublin.

That he might afterwards plead the cause of his unhappy countrymen in a Protestant kingdom and in a Protestant Parliament, this child, intended for such lofty purposes, was also to be educated as a Protestant. His father belonged, as a matter of course, to the dominant religion; the law did not recognize a Roman Catholic attorney. But that the child might ever feel the warmest sympathy for the oppressed majority of Irishmen, his mother was of the proscribed creed. He was thus to unite in his person all that was really good in both religions, and all that politically may be necessary to make Ireland a free, happy, and united nation.

The name of more than one Edmund Burke may be read in the genealogical records of the proud Anglo-Norman family of De Burgh even in the most remote ages.* The attempt however to trace a satisfactory pedigree of Burke from this high aristocratic stock is altogether vain. He was himself above such vanity. He never laid any claim to such derivative honours.† It would have been more admirable in those relatives, and others who have written on his life, to have allowed the

* Harleian MS., in the British Museum.

† Cavendish Reports, vol. ii. p. 396.

matter to rest as he wished it, and not to have set up a claim it is impossible to substantiate, to a descent which could not, under any circumstances, render him more illustrious. He ever showed some degree of contempt for the emblazonry of the Heralds' College, and the meek chroniclers of hereditary greatness.*

The or and erminous, the cross gules and lion rampant sable, of the noble family of De Burgh, had for this Burke no attractions. Hubert de Burgh, the famous Earl of Kent, was doubtless a great man in his day and generation; so also was his uncle, Adelm de Burgh, who settled in Ireland, and from whom Richard de Burgh, the Lord of Connaught and Trim, derived his origin; so also, it is not to be disputed, were the Lord of Connaught's sons, William Earl of Ulster and William Earl of Clanricarde.

But what are these noblemen to us? Their great deeds are but dimly discerned through the grim hoar of turbulent centuries; and if report be entitled to any credit, it was not from great noblemen, but from some honest citizens who figured in the town-councils of Limerick during the seventeenth century, that the greatest of the Burkes, and the greatest of Irishmen, was descended. This Edmund Burke, so far as may justly be conjectured, sprang not from a Peer, but from a Mayor.

This Mayor however was not, like all Shakspeare's, a ridiculous and contemptible personage. He fills respectably not only some pages in the civic annals of Limerick, but also in the majestic work of Clarendon. He was not however the first mayor of his name, nor probably of his family. The citizens of Limerick, who bore the name of Bourke, were all Roman Catholics. In the

* Letter to the Duke of Bedford.—Works and Correspondence, vol. v. p. 232.

Charter granted to their city by James I., the name William Bourke is expressly mentioned. In 1626, there was a James Bourke, mayor, and a George Bourke, sheriff; and it is remarked, that in this year the mayor and sheriffs went publicly to Mass.* But the mayoralty of John Bourke, who was elected in 1645, was the most memorable; and it is with him that rumour has connected, and with some appearance of reason, the ancestry of Edmund Burke.

The Marquis of Ormond had made his proclamation of peace, and was endeavouring to enlist the Irish Catholics in the service of Charles I., whose cause was then at its last extremity. But the Irish Catholics were not in arms for the Crown, nor were they prepared to lay them down at the command of the Lord Lieutenant. Strafford's tyranny, and the rebellion which that tyranny provoked, as Edmund Burke always maintained,† was too recent for Irishmen to be fervently loyal. It was however the duty of John Bourke, as Mayor, to see that the proclamation was read by the King-at-arms, in the market-place of Limerick; and though the popular feeling excited by the priests, ran strongly against any pacific measures, he resolved to do his duty. The magistrates, with himself at their head, in all the pomp of their municipal honours, had scarcely arrived at the Market-cross, where the ceremony was to be performed, when the mob rose, fell upon the alderman, knocked down the mayor, tore the herald's coat from off his back, and obliged him to run for shelter into the mayor's house. Mr. John Bourke was violently deposed, and a furious fanatic, named Dominick Fanning, was chosen in his

* Fitzgerald's History of Limerick, vol. ii., Appendix, p. 14.

† Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 168.

stead. So many stones were thrown on this day, that for a long time afterwards it was familiarly called, in Limerick, the Stony Thursday.* Dominick Fanning, as the ringleader in the riot, received the thanks of Rienuncini, the Papal Nuncio, and all the actors in it this dignitary's apostolical benediction. Clarendon comments severely on this disturbance, declaring that a herald who came even to denounce war, was respected by all civilized nations, and that never before was such an atrocity committed on a messenger of peace.†

Mr. John Bourke, thus so ignominiously thrust out of office, appears, somewhat later, once more on the stage of history. Four eventful years had passed away, but the Marquis of Ormond was still fruitlessly negotiating with the citizens of Limerick. Despairing of any accommodation, he plainly told them that he must leave them to their fate, since, though the Parliamentary army, which had inflicted such terrible vengeance on their countrymen in other places, was even then on the borders of their county, and Galway and Limerick were the only important towns remaining in the possession of the Catholics, they yet refused to allow him the means of taking measures for their defence. Alderman John Bourke, and another citizen, were repeatedly commissioned to treat with the Marquis; but their proposals were always so vague, that they brought matters to no satisfactory conclusion. At length Ireton's soldiers appeared before the walls of the city. The Viceroy, being still unable to come to terms with the inhabitants, was compelled to withdraw himself beyond the seas; and he left the Marquis of Clanricarde, the acknowledged head of the

* Fitzgerald's History of Limerick, vol. ii. p. 259.

† Clarendon's Short View of the State of Ireland, par. 16.

Bourkes, to act as he might think best for the cause. So exclusively national however did this rebellion continue, that this nobleman of their own religion could, as Lord Deputy, make no more impression on the minds of the townspeople, than the Lord Lieutenant had done. The city at last surrendered to Ireton. Dominick Fanning and twenty-three others were executed; the Marquis of Clanricarde's estate was confiscated; and all the citizens, among whom there was not a single Protestant, had only three months allowed them to remove themselves, and three months more to remove their household goods, whithersoever Heaven might conduct their steps.

The sufferings which Alderman John Bourke had undergone in the performance of his duty, and in endeavouring to effect a reconciliation between the citizens and the Marquis of Ormond, were not likely to be regarded as meritorious by the Puritanical warriors. He probably saved little from the wreck of his fortunes, and with that little settled in the county of Cork. It is not unlikely that his son, in the brief hour of Catholic ascendency under James II., may have recovered some portion of the property which the unfortunate mayor had lost; for both of Burke's literary executors, Dr. Laurence and Dr. King, affirmed, independently of each other, that his grandfather actually held a certain estate near Limerick.* After the triumph of King William, and the establishment of the Protestant religion in worldly prosperity, the property was probably again forfeited. This was what actually occurred to many of the Catholics who had ad-

* "I am assured," says Dr. Bisset, "by Dr. Laurence, that Burke's grandfather possessed an estate of three thousand a year near Limerick, which was confiscated."—Life of Burke, vol. i. p. 39.

hered to the King of their own faith : a Sovereign who, however indefensible in his conduct towards England, had at least deserved the allegiance of the Irish Catholics, since he was the only English monarch that had ever looked upon them as a people having the common sympathies and natural feelings of humanity. This account of Burke's ancestry on his father's side must be presented with diffidence, as it is only by comparing rumour with rumour, and rejecting misstatement after misstatement, that an intelligible idea on this subject can by any possibility be formed.

The assertion that his father resided at Limerick before he removed to Dublin, confirms this narrative. So also does the fact, of which there cannot be the slightest doubt, that he was not a wealthy man. He possessed no estate in real property. The farm of Clohir, which Edmund afterwards inherited from his eldest brother, certainly never belonged to his father, or his father's family ; it had previously been possessed by some branch of his mother's kinsmen, and was, by means which will afterwards be touched upon, acquired by Garret Burke, from these Nagles.*

This was the family name of his mother. She is said to have been descended from Sir Richard Nagle, the Attorney-General of James II. ; but it has never been positively decided, and it is now impossible to discover, what was her exact relationship to this able lawyer and ambitious politician, who was, in the Parliament of King James, Member for Cork, chosen Speaker of the House of Commons, made a Secretary of State on the

* New Monthly Magazine, vol. xvi. p. 153. No evidence can be more unequivocal on this point than Burke's letter of December 9, 1777, as given in this Magazine.

dismissal of Melfort, and appointed one of the Lords Justices to administer the affairs of Ireland on the death of the Lord Lieutenant Tyrconnel. He was a staunch Catholic, and had been educated in the Jesuit College at St. Omer, a fact which is worth attention in connection with Burke, from the many calumnies about his having been educated at the same seminary, that were afterwards so widely spread. Of all the adherents of James II., Sir Richard Nagle was one of the most respectable; and he appears to have been about the ablest man in the Catholic Parliament. It was in the county of Cork that many of the branches of this powerful family resided; and about Castletown Roche, the relatives of Mrs. Burke seem to have been very numerous. They were all of course decided Catholics, and Mrs. Burke never abandoned the religion of her fathers.

Such, on both the father and mother's side, were Burke's ancestors. And here it may be necessary to say a few words in defence of one who has seldom had an apologist. When Edmund became associated with Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Newcastle is stated to have gone in a panic to the Marquis and informed him that his newly appointed private secretary had been educated at St. Omer, that he was a Jesuit, that his family had been all wild Irish rebels, and most bigoted members of the Church of Rome. Now, though Burke was not a Catholic, nor had been educated in a foreign country, yet the poor old Duke had some reason for his alarm. He could not have supposed that this young Irishman, sprung from a family that had distinguished itself in all the bloody scenes of his native land, from a family that had become more Irish than the aboriginal Irish, from a family that had been repeatedly in rebellion against the

English dominion, whose estates had been confiscated, whose religion had been outlawed, and whose representatives of the Catholic communion were all but slaves, was, by the dispensation of Providence, chosen to be the first, the greatest, and the wisest of the emancipators of Ireland, the most brilliant and far-sighted of British statesmen, the most enlightened and eloquent defender of established Governments, and the most profound and comprehensive of political philosophers that had yet existed in the world.

Burke certainly never forgot that his forefathers had been Catholics. He never forgot that their religion was proscribed in the country he so much loved. Though himself by education and by conviction a sincere member of the Church of England, he ever respected the creed of the mother who had cherished him in his helpless infancy, of Mrs. Crotty, the nurse, who had borne him in her arms, and of his uncle Garret, whom he believed to be the best and kindest of human beings.* So powerful an influence had this association on his whole life, that, unless it is steadily borne in mind, much of his history and political career must be quite unintelligible.

According to the College register, which contains the most authentic record of his age yet found, he was born early in the year 1728. I have fruitlessly endeavoured to discover in Dublin the parish register in which the exact year of his birth might be more satisfactorily established; but in the absence of such evidence, there seems no sufficient reason for rejecting that which the books of Trinity College supply. The day and the month are,

* "Of all the men I have seen in any situation, I really think he is the person I should wish myself, or any one I greatly loved, the most to resemble."—Burke to his cousin Garret: Letter in New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 386.

however, fixed by himself. In a letter to Lord Rockingham, dated January 12th, 1775, he says, "My birth-day, I need not say how long ago."* It is to be regretted, that when he wrote these few pleasant words, he did not also mention the year; what was unnecessary then, is to us very necessary; for this important point, in the history of the humblest of mankind, cannot in his case be completely authenticated. If, in the dearth of positive facts on this question, a conjecture may be permitted, perhaps the year 1728 is as much too early to correspond with other circumstances of Burke's life, as the year 1730 is undoubtedly too late. By fixing on the year 1729, many difficulties, which are otherwise insurmountable, would be removed. It is absurd to suppose that he was two years younger than the statement of his age given in the books of Trinity College, and that he was only in his fourteenth year when he began to attend lectures; but it is not improbable that he may have been a year younger than the register affirms. On this supposition he would, according to the New Style, have been born on the 12th of January, 1729.

His father's professional practice in Dublin was of the best kind. He however met with some pecuniary losses, which are not clearly ascertained; and his business, which Burke states to have been superior to that of any other solicitor, gradually diminished as he gave way to fits of temper.† He was, in truth, of a splenetic temperament, and this constitutional disease increased with his years. From him Edmund appears to have derived that irritability which displayed itself so prominently in

* Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 8. It appears to me very obvious that, when Burke thus indicated the day of his birth, he had himself made the allowance for the difference between the Old and New Style.

† Prior, p. 5.

his old-age, and contributed to give an air of exaggeration and eccentricity to actions which were dictated by the purest motives. The father's infirmity may be traced in the son, though what was petty peevishness in the old solicitor, rendering himself and all his family miserable, was, in the philosophic statesman, the vehement outpouring of a most righteous wrath, directed against every form of cruelty, iniquity, and oppression.

His mother gave birth to many children,* of whom only himself, two brothers, and one sister, attained majority. His elder brother, Garret, was of a somewhat melancholy cast of mind. He is said to have followed his father's profession, and he died unmarried in 1765. His younger brother, Richard, was from childhood distinguished for the love of frolic and drollery. He also lived a bachelor, shared in all Edmund's fortunes, and will frequently appear in this history. His sister, Julian, was educated in the religion of her mother; in 1765 she married Mr. French, of Loughrea, and it is from her that any representative of the family now exists. Of the three brothers, Richard was in the early days of childhood and boyhood thought the most promising. His talents were lively in the extreme; he was blessed with a very happy disposition; a better heart than his never beat in a human bosom; but he had none of his brother's earnestness and industry. He was to pass through life, loved indeed by all who knew him, but in comparative obscurity, while the little pensive poring Ned levelled all the rugged mountains in his path, did great things for the world, and left an undying name.

* This is implied in her letter of October 1766, in which she alludes to the "few children I have alive and well."—Correspondence, vol. i. p. 111.

During his boyhood, and even for some years after he had reached manhood, Edmund's health was very delicate. He afterwards became strong, and even athletic; but a tendency to consumption early showed itself, and many of his years of childhood were spent among his maternal relatives in the south of Ireland. The close atmosphere of Arran Quay was frequently exchanged for the fresh air of Castletown Roche; and his first impressions of existence, as his eyes opened on the world, were derived from the households and neighbourhood of the kind friends who professed the Roman Catholic faith. His sympathies for the oppressed were in this manner to be deeply rooted, and to grow with his being: they were no casual impulses, but engrafted in the child's heart, and there remained till it ceased to beat for ever.

Under the roofs of his uncles, he spent some happy years, to which he ever looked back with fondness and gratitude. There were Uncles James, Patrick, and Garret, all within some little distance of each other, as farmers cultivating, either for themselves or for others, their patrimonial glebe, and, under the dark shadow which injustice and intolerance had thrown over them, struggling to render their existence tolerable. They knew not what a treasure they possessed in their little sensitive nephew, who played round their knees, shared with his little cousins in all their affection, and, with no thought of his great future, played on the Bawn of Ballyduffe.*

Nor, as his mind expanded, were the natural beauties

* New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 382.—“Our little boys are very well, but I should think them still better, if they (or the one that is on his legs) were running about the Bawn at Ballyduffe, as his father used to do.”—Letter from Burke, October 11, 1759.

and historical associations of the neighbourhood destitute of charms in the eyes of the intelligent and imaginative boy. Castletown Roche itself might be a humble village, with a poor parish church standing in the midst of it; but there, on a rocky elevation, was the old castle from which the place derived its name, and which had been so gallantly defended in the absence of her lord by Lady Roche against Cromwell's soldiers. There was the ground on the other side of the river where the attacking forces had been stationed, and which was still called the Campfield. There were the old walls, against which their artillery had been directed, and which still bore the marks of the Puritan guns. There was the stream, with an interest of its own; for it was the Awbeg, the fair and bright Mulla of Spenser, with its weeping waves still flowing onward, as when he wrote the sweetest, the noblest, and the purest of English poems. There, too, at the distance of a pleasant walk, were the bare walls of an old ruined castle, once the proud residence of the Desmonds, and afterwards inhabited by the poet himself, the bard of that age of chivalry which the boy who now sat reading *The Faery Queen* in the scenes of its inspiration, was in his old-age to declare, in immortal language, existed no longer. There, from the commanding site of Kilcolman, was displayed one of the noblest prospects in all Ireland, on which the dreaming Edmund might gaze away hour after hour, and think of the times when Spenser and Raleigh, on the same spot, sat discoursing of war and love and poetry, the courtiers' fears, their Sovereign's coquettices, the glories of England, and the wrongs of Ireland. The greatest of writers has said that a Divinity may ever be seen directing each individual human life to its purposed end. Who cannot discern it here? Read

amid the scenes in which it was written, *The Faery Queen* could never be forgotten ; and many a splendid sentence and poetical allusion, which give such a peculiar fascination to the driest subject when treated by Burke, may easily be traced to the bard of Kilcolman, whose mind was filled with such noble visions of all that is beautiful in humanity, who was, as his *View of the State of Ireland* amply testifies, not only a great poet, but also a true political philosopher, and who suffered so cruelly for his attachment to the country of his adoption.*

These were pleasant days for the little Edmund. But such times have their period. He could not leave, without regret, the fireside of his kind uncles. All that was endearing in remembrance of his childhood was connected with his residence with his mother's family. At home, under his father's eye, he seems to have been much less comfortable : at no time was the parental roof associated in his mind with many delightful recollections. When he would recall the really happy hours of his childhood and boyhood, his memory turned, not to the family circle at Arran Quay, but to his friends in Cork and Tipperary, or to those in another scene, to which he was now sent, and which also left not less powerful and enduring effects on his character.

There was to be nothing sectarian in the disposition of the future statesman. He knew what Protestantism was ; he had experienced what Catholicism was in the daily lives of those whom he best loved ; and that his benevolence should be truly enlarged, and that he should

* "Whoever relishes and reads Spenser as he ought to be read will have a strong hold of the English language."—Burke to Mr. Hardy: *Life of Lord Charlemont*, vol. ii. p. 286 (second edition). I have not space to indicate the many coincidences of expression between Burke and Spenser. They are very numerous.

be the enlightened supporter of a thoroughly comprehensive system of toleration, the last two years of his boyhood were spent among a household of Dissenters, of the extreme class which rival sects, that hated each other with a deadly hatred, had only agreed in persecuting; and he beheld in one of the despised people an example of the purest virtue and the most generous sympathy. This was education indeed, and not mere instruction in Greek and Latin grammars. The boy saw with his own eyes what real goodness there was in the members of the most opposite religious persuasions, and taught himself to respect genuine piety, even under the strangest garb. Singularly enough, the schoolmaster to whom he was to be indebted for his most important steps in real knowledge, was neither a member of the Church of England nor of the Church of Rome, but a member of the Society of Friends.

Abraham Shackleton sprang from a very humble family in Yorkshire. Being of a delicate constitution, he found himself unable to work at manual labour, and prudently determined to educate himself for the business of a teacher. Though he did not begin to learn Latin until he was twenty years of age, he soon became proficient. Unlike that of most self-educated persons, his classical knowledge was correct and critical, as well as extensive; and he composed in this dead language with much elegance and purity. There has always been more intercourse between the scattered members of the Society of Friends than between those of any other religious communion. Hearing an excellent account of Abraham's character and attainments, some of his religious brethren invited him over to Ireland; and after he had been a private tutor among them for some years, he gave so

much satisfaction that the Friends all united in their efforts to persuade him to settle in the country. They succeeded in their endeavours.

On the 1st of March, 1726, Abraham Shackleton opened a large boarding-school at Ballitore, a retired village in the county of Kildare, and twenty-eight miles south of Dublin. His undertaking prospered, as it deserved to do, from the unfeigned piety, untiring industry, and judicious management of the modest pedagogue. Every member of the Society of Friends felt himself personally interested in Abraham's success, and a numerous body of pupils soon filled the rows of benches in the schoolroom. The establishment of this academy was attended with some excellent results, even for the sect to which the schoolmaster belonged. When it was first instituted, the Quakers were very little known in Ireland; but as so many boys of different religions went home happy, contented, and improved, every Mid-summer and Christmas, the prejudices with which the Friends were regarded began to be dissipated, and the people called Quakers no longer to be the object of ridicule and contempt.

There was nothing dry nor hard in Abraham's nature. Combined with good-nature and unaffected simplicity, there was a natural elegance in his manners which gave a peculiar charm to his personal address. His alms were bestowed with no stinting hand. The poor, for miles round, resorted to the kitchen of the great boarding-school at Ballitore for all the broken meats, which were of course abundant, from the plentiful table required to feed so many keen appetites; nor were the sick, the aged, and the destitute ever turned disconsolately away from the doors. To some, medicine was

given ; those who had seen better days were delicately relieved ; all had their tales of misfortune listened to ; the houseless here found a shelter. One old man lived to the age of a hundred years, and never wanted a home at Ballitore. The old steward, Gill, whom the greatest of the Quaker's pupils ever affectionately remembered, was sheltered in the same helpless condition, and faithfully served the family for three generations.*

But though Abraham Shackleton's virtues were numerous, and his charities extensive, though his school flourished, and his scholars respected him, his useful life must have long since been forgotten had it not been for the interest which is excited in everything relating to the personal history of one of three brothers who arrived at Ballitore one morning in the May of 1741. Quiet, modest, earnest, intelligent, ever ready to oblige, always careful not to wound the feelings of others, the engaging manners of the boy, Edmund Burke, were conspicuous from the first, and rendered him a general favourite. Some shining qualities now began to appear, and caught the observant eye of the schoolmaster. Hitherto, Edmund's studies had been neglected ; but he now applied himself with diligence, and made such rapid progress as to gladden Abraham Shackleton's heart. The master liked his pupil, and the pupil became fond of the master. Though Burke remained scarcely two years at Ballitore, they were years which had a mighty influence on all his subsequent career.†

In the House of Commons he paid a noble tribute to

* This account of Abraham Shackleton, and the establishment of his school, is principally derived from the Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, by their daughter, Mary Leadbeater, and published in 1822.

† *Ibid.*

the memory of Abraham Shackleton, declaring that he was an honour to his sect, though that sect was one of the purest. He ever considered it as one of the greatest blessings of his life that he had been placed at the good Quaker's academy, and readily acknowledged it was to Abraham Shackleton that he owed the education that had made him worth anything.* A member of the Society of Friends had always peculiar claims on his sympathy and regard.†

In his pleasures of memory Ballitore disputed the palm even with Castletown Roche. In the background to the picture of his eventful life, this pretty village, hid in the vale and encompassed with hills, gives a calm relief to the mind. It is delightful to imagine the boy by the silver stream of the Greise as it meanders through the valley, standing on a little bridge listening to the waters as they dash among the stones, gazing on the mill whose clacking was so familiar to his ears, playing in the mill-field among the bright cowslips, reading in the grove with its beechen shade which sheltered him from the summer's sun, passing by the poor huts of the Burrow, sitting on the seats under the mouldering piers of the Burrowgate, or wandering amid the double row of elms by the river's side. Time flies fast in the pleasant valley of Ballitore, with its white houses and green trees.‡

But it was not merely a love of the natural beauty of the place, nor the reverence with which he regarded his schoolmaster, that for ever associated in the heart and

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 17.

† "When Mr. Burke was informed that Mr. West was a Quaker, he said that he always regarded it among the most fortunate circumstances of his life that his first preceptor was a member of the Society of Friends."—Early Life and Studies of Benjamin West, vol. ii. p. 8.

‡ See a pretty little poem on Ballitore, by Mrs. Leadbeater.

mind of the great Statesman this humble village and its Quaker school. He had other ties. Here he formed a friendship which was as characteristic of the man as any other circumstance attending his life. All frank, generous, and enthusiastic schoolboys seek out a friend ; but this bond seldom endures after the first rough contact with the world. The friendship begun at this time between Burke and Richard Shackleton, the schoolmaster's son, remained fresh, pure, and ardent, until the close of their earthly existence. Richard was two or three years older than Edmund ; but the mind of the younger boy was fast progressing, and his judgment and attainments were soon equal to those of his friend. This union was highly beneficial. Edmund's ardour for knowledge was increased by companionship ; his intellectual powers were stimulated ; his imagination was quickened. The two friends read together, walked together, and composed together. Richard Shackleton had already become a poetizer, and appears to have been the means of awakening the same talent in his younger friend. It is a great epoch in a boy's life when he writes his first verses, and finds that he has within him the faculty of rhyming ; and these two friends of fourteen and sixteen years of age were already, in their own estimation, more or less poets. Happily for them, however, their friendship was to survive long after their poetic dreams had vanished for ever.

What a different future there was before these two schoolboys of Ballitore ! What a contrast there appears in their characters as displayed in their subsequent lives ! And yet how strong and peculiar was the tie which no trials could ever sever ! None who have not read Richard Shackleton's letters to his wife, so strongly tinctured with the peculiar phraseology of his sect, can form any idea of

the singular nature of the connection between the rigid Quaker and the comprehensive Philosopher.

Richard Shackleton's life was to be full of pious humility. Far from envying the celebrity of his friend, he was to look with some degree of austerity on Burke's pursuits. Though possessed of great abilities, which might have made him distinguished in any walk of activity and ambition, yet, believing that it was only in the quiet shade that his piety and virtue could flourish, he was deliberately to shun, on principle, all the attractions of the world.* His suppressed energy was, however, to be seen under the black velvet cap which kept "his lank testimonial hair" out of his eyes. Even in his seclusion he would possess much public spirit. When he should retire from the business of his school he would be not less diligent in the business of the religious society to which he was so devoted. But before this period could arrive, his friend's reputation would be extended throughout the world ; and Europe, America, and Asia, have each been the sphere of his philanthropic industry. He was to labour in the light of day, and in sight of the whole world. He was to take an important part in making and unmaking ministries, in ruling great empires, in resisting great oppressions, in impeaching great criminals, in vindicating great principles. And yet, however opposite were the paths they took through life, they were ever to keep each other in view, and to continue to respect and love each other to the end. They were always to meet with delight, and to part with regret. In Burke's magnificent residence at Beaconsfield, Richard

* This was Burke's own opinion. See the letter to Mrs. Leadbeater, on the death of Richard Shackleton, in *Works and Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 138.

would, unknown to the family, be offering up prayers to the Almighty for his great friend ; and the Statesman would ever look forward to a conversation with Shackleton as the most exquisite of pleasures.*

Though Burke left the school early in 1743, his heart remained in Ballitore to the last. A storm at length burst over the pleasant valley ; but Providence spared him the pain of knowing, that a few months after his death, when the Irish Rebellion of 1798 broke out, an outbreak which he had foreseen, and the apprehensions of which disturbed his last hours, even his beloved Ballitore should suffer from the ravages of insurrection and the retributive vengeance of the Government. These were dreadful days for the good Quakers ; but the grave had then closed over all that was mortal of the two school friends, who, in the spring of 1743, shed many tears at parting from each other, as Edmund was going once more to his father's home, and beginning to acquire his first serious experience of human life, with its joys and its sorrows, its hopes and its disappointments. No time was permitted to elapse between these changes of scene. According to the authority of Shackleton himself, which on this subject is unexceptionable, Burke, the very day after he left the school at Ballitore, became a student of Trinity, in Dublin.†

* "This annual visit had been for some years a source of satisfaction which I cannot easily express."—Burke to Mrs. Leadbeater, September 8, 1792.

† London Evening Post, from April 14th to 17th, 1770. This important memorandum relating to Burke's early life, and written by his most intimate friend, clears many obscurities. It will be found in the Appendix to this Work.

CHAPTER II.

1743-1750.

AT COLLEGE.

ON the 14th of April, 1743, a year and eleven months after he first went to Ballitore, the name of Edmund Burke was entered on the books of Trinity College. It has been repeatedly said, that he did not actually become a student until the following year. But it is very unlikely, besides Richard Shackleton's assertion to the contrary, and which also coincides with the evidence of the college register, that Mr. Richard Burke would take his son from the school at Ballitore, merely to spend a year in idleness at home ; and nothing can show more clearly how little such hearsay statements, on which so many circumstances of his life have been based, can be relied upon, than the simple fact, that the first letter in his published correspondence addressed to Richard Shackleton, is dated the 9th of January, 1744, and shows him to be then a student regularly attending the college lectures, and evidently one who had been some months in the institution.*

There is the usual poetic license in this epistle. Though the letter is written in January, the description, in verse,

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 1, edit. 1852.

of his daily life and habits, is taken from the past May, as giving, of course, more rein to the imagination. He describes the ordinary incidents of one model day, from which his friend may judge of his usual existence; and by reducing to plain prose the pith of this high-flown narrative, we may see how he spent his time in the first years of his academical career.

He rises early. Walking out to enjoy the air of the morning, and the beautiful sunrise beyond the bounds of the city, he regrets his absence from the lovely scenery and rural charms of Ballitore, which he had left to begin a sterner career; and, after watching the lark soar into the skies, moralizing on the beauties of Nature, and feeling a youthful emotion of gratitude to the Creator of such a lovely world, he returns with heavy steps to his father's residence on Arran Quay. After breakfast, he has to hurry off to college; but the Muse neither can nor will sing of the nature of his studies. He takes every opportunity between lectures to roam in the parks; and while lying under the trees, and hearing the bustle of the busy city, he still pines for the tall firs by the river at Ballitore, and all the harmless joys of the country. As evening comes on, he wends his way out of the throng of the town, down to the debatable ground, where the river, land, and sea seem contending for mastery, and where large bulwarks of stone bid defiance to the lashing and roaring of the waves, robbed of soil which, having been once submerged, had now been converted into green pastures, on which lambs were peacefully playing and feeding. There he sits gazing upon the ships, the ocean, and the city, until the shadows of night deepen, and the red disc of the sun slowly sinks beneath the waters. He at length returns home, and

retiring early to rest, refreshes himself for the duties of another day.*

There was, in all this, the vague yearning of genius for the indefinite and the immaterial ; the aspirations of the immortal spirit, just confined within its earthly tenement, for the eternal heaven from which it had come down. Deep was calling unto deep. In some fifty years of time this longing would be satisfied ; what then was would cease to be ; what had been before would again be. But the Irish youth feels the impulse which he cannot subdue, and therefore he walks, and dreams, and rhymes, hails the sun as it is rising, and follows it wistfully as it is setting ; and with abstracted eyes, and thoughts far beyond any power of expression, looks out upon the unknown vast.

With such a spirit upon him, he had but little prospect of attaining the highest academical honours. They were not for him, or for such as he. In a mere prize-fight, Shaw, the pugilistic Life-Guardsman, who killed several men with his fists at Waterloo, would have pitched his commander-in-chief, the Duke of Wellington, out of the ring ; and in a contest of more intellectual gladiatorialship, a Samuel Parr would have beaten a William Shakespeare out of the field. To Trinity College, Burke carried a good knowledge of the ordinary classics, and a considerable stock of general information. He had also acquired the invaluable habit of miscellaneous reading, which gave him far more extensive views than could be acquired from the ordinary text-books of a college. Whatever course of discipline a man of true genius may undergo, he invariably educates himself ; and Burke seems never to have thought of applying himself systematically

* Works and Correspondence, pp. 2-4.

to one branch of study, or seriously laboured to acquire the coveted distinctions which are frequently gained by drudging selfishness, and are perhaps incompatible with the calm pursuit of general knowledge, that to be thoroughly beneficial in youth, and to influence permanently the mind in future years, must be loved, not merely for the sake of gold medals, prize-books, and worldly distinctions, but for itself alone.

His father may have expected other things. Mr. Burke's infirmities were growing upon him ; he was losing clients by his ungovernable temper ; and the son who was to immortalize his name was the object of parental persecution.* Not being happy at home, it is no wonder that Edmund sighed for Ballitore. Among the household on Arran Quay, he had none to sympathize with his dreams, his poetry, his eccentricities, and his aspirations. He might think himself a genius, but it was not to be expected that his own relations should yet think him one, or believe that in his petty irregularities and his strange imaginings he was wiser than they with all their solid prudence.

Richard Shackleton and he were, on the contrary, sworn friends. Their hopes, their fears, their studies, their opinions, were all communicated to each other. Shackleton was Mirza, and Burke Zelim : they had no reserves, no fits of coldness, and no jealousies, though they both continued writing verses, and believed themselves poets.

Burke was, indeed, more a poetizer in his youth than was ever supposed during his illustrious life, or until some time after his death. When Sir James Mackintosh said that had Burke ever acquired the habit of versifi-

* Letter from Dennis of November 21, 1747.—Prior, p. 32.

cation, he would have poured forth volumes of sublime poetry,* he little suspected that while he was at Trinity College, the great Statesman and Philosopher was the most inveterate of versifiers. He seldom wrote a letter to his friend without enclosing him some specimens of these choice productions. They breathe, as every sentence that ever fell from his lips breathes, a sincere love of all that is virtuous, beautiful, and pious. They show, as all his life shows, an earnest mind, endowed with much sensibility. But they have little of that originality of thought and power of imagination which distinguish the political writings of his manhood and old-age. They seldom rise above the level of the ambitious commonplaces which other statesmen, of literary abilities far inferior to his, have written in their younger days, and grown ashamed of as they advanced to riper years. But Burke continued his poetical efforts longer, and met on the whole with less success than any man who ever engaged in political life with a tenth part of his intellectual qualifications. During all the time he attended Trinity College, he followed this deceitful mirage ; and what he thought were the shady groves of Helicon and the cloudy summits of Parnassus, were indeed but columns of sand driving before the barren east wind.

Connected with this juvenile friendship, there is something of much more interest than in all this poetry. The grave and precise Richard Shackleton was not such a confidant as most youths at college would select as a bosom friend ; nor are the topics of their correspondence such as gay students would generally choose. They wrote much to each other on religious questions. Mirza assures his dear Zelim that he fully agrees with him in

* Mackintosh Memoirs, by his Son.

thinking that those who never had the happiness of hearing the Saviour's name will not be damned. But of sectaries who break away from mere trifles or indifference, Mirza cannot think so charitably. "What a great crime schism is," says he, "you can't be ignorant." He refers his friend to the reasons he had given him in his last letter, and also to several texts of Scripture, which he hopes may bring him to the same way of thinking. He then replies to the good advice that Zelim in return had given him, and confesses that it is hard to live according to the precepts of Christianity. The townsman was beset on every side with temptations, and could not but envy his friend in the country, who is free from the snares which render it no easy task in Dublin to be commonly virtuous. But with all this earnest piety and self-distrust, it is amusing to see the air of superiority which Burke assumes in rebuking his friend, who was some years his senior, for having intimated that he had the testimony of well-doing in his breast. Edmund advises him most seriously to repress such notions whenever they arise, as subtle stratagems of the Devil, and to study attentively the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.* This is surely character. Such indications are more worthy of attention than translations of the Georgics, poems on the Blackwater, and complimentary verses to friends.

The river rose one day to a great height. The inhabitants of Arran Quay were prisoners in their houses, and objects of derision to their good-natured neighbours on the other Quay, who were quite secure, while their unfortunate brethren, in danger of first having their houses fall about their ears, and then of being drowned, were anxiously looking out of their windows and watch-

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 6.

ing the rise and fall of the Liffey as the Egyptians did the Nile. The cellars had long been inundated; the swelling water had reached the first floor; it was threatening to rise higher; in a few moments the house of Mr. Burke, attorney-at-law, might fall upon the heads of himself and family. Undismayed by the hoarse rumbling of the waters around him, the whistling of the wind, and the gloomy darkness of the day, Edmund sits down to write to his friend, and calmly moralizes on man, the mighty, the feeble lord, who is master of everything and yet can command nothing, whose will is but the slave of circumstances, and whose grandest schemes are thrown into irretrievable ruin by one element encroaching, ever so slightly, upon another. Was Providence then to be accused of injustice? No! The young moralist laments that he does not always that which is right, and which is not dependent on the changes of the world or the sport of fortune, but which would remain uninjured though the globe should fall to pieces and bury all mankind in the ruins.* What his friend Zelim thought of such elevated sentiments does not appear.

Richard was in Dublin about the Christmas of 1745, and the two friends spent many pleasant hours together. Burke assures him that he fully reciprocates all his feelings on their separation. He could not, indeed, call the sensation he experienced grief; it was a kind of melting tenderness tinged with sorrow; it was like the sensation a good man feels at the hour of death.†

Amid so much rhyming and moralizing, the echoes of great events occasionally vibrate in the young Student's ears, and become the subject of a passing remark. It is rather curious to notice how the cause of the unfortunate

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 7.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 8.

descendant of James II., at the time of the last Rebellion, was regarded by a descendant of his Irish Attorney-General. Though so many of Burke's relatives were still Catholics, and though he had spent so many years of his childhood among the Nagles, yet he has not even at this early time the slightest sympathy with the Jacobites. He pointedly speaks of Charles Edward as the Pretender. He writes in the spirit of a Revolution Whig, who could afford to pity the misfortunes of those who had ruined their families for a cause which they at least believed to be just.*

In the summer of 1746, he had a private sorrow which affected him much more deeply than Charles Edward's calamities. His mother fell dangerously ill. She was subject to fits of nervous depression, which seem to have been constitutional with her, and to have remained with her to the termination of her life. Burke's younger brother, Richard, was brought home from the school at Ballitore to divert her mind. For three days Edmund despaired of his mother's life; and for the first time, as he says himself, knew what grief was.†

He had by this time obtained a classical scholarship of trifling value. For this he might thank his old schoolmaster, Abraham Shackleton, and not his own application. Though those who would endeavour to persuade themselves and others that Burke was distinguished at college, have regarded it as a fact of much interest, it argued no great attainments.

Neither at Oxford nor Cambridge were there, during the last century, more men who distinguished themselves as authors, statesmen, and orators, than at the humbler institution of the Irish metropolis. But the Irish celebrities

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 9.

† *Ibid.*

were truly Irish. While many of their eminent rivals at the English Universities attained academical honours in their youth, in all the brilliant catalogue of Irish genius inscribed in the registers of Trinity College, scarcely one name is to be found in the front rank of University distinction. Some of them were nearly expelled; some ran away; some just saved themselves from being plucked; all were more or less idlers.

To this rule it is in vain to consider Burke as an exception. If he was not among those who incurred severe censure for great irregularities, he was certainly, even in his own opinion, one of the idlers. The longer he remained at college, the more desultory his course of study seems to have become. He was not more steady in applying his mind to one subject in 1747 than in 1743.

He took up violently with natural philosophy; this he calls his *furor mathematicus*. Then he worked at logic; this was his *furor logicus*. He tells Shackleton that the *furor historicus* succeeded, but that this malady speedily subsided into his old complaint, the *furor poeticus*, the most dangerous and difficult to cure of all these many forms of madness.* That, however, he could himself laugh at this inconstancy shows that he did not find either the disease or its consequences unpleasant; and that while sensible of his infirmity, he was not desirous of amendment. He perhaps felt that in endeavouring to realize the undefined but perpetually recurring visions of future eminence, such a method of study had also its advantages.

His desultory acquisitions were eventually to be of more importance to him than any mere scholastic attainments. Of his favourite author many accounts have been

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 12.

given, but they deserve little confidence. From his letters we know, however, that of the Roman historians, Sallust was his delight ; as, indeed, that most acute of writers deserved to be, for his inimitable delineation of character, the dramatic power of his narrative, and his moral and political wisdom. Many readers would prefer Cicero's epistles to his great orations ; but Burke, at this time, thought the speeches much more valuable than the marvellous correspondence of the great Roman statesman, orator, and philosopher, whose name was afterwards to be so frequently associated with his own.* How deeply he had imbued his mind with the classical imagery of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, he showed so much throughout his public career that he was reproached with introducing them on all occasions.† There are few indications of his application to Greek literature. He did however instruct himself, either now or somewhat later, very carefully in the history and politics of these illustrious Commonwealths, that represent, as in a miniature, all the wars, tumults, and crimes which for countless ages have devastated the world, and include in a little space so much that the statesman of all times must learn.‡

Of modern authors he undoubtedly took most pleasure in Milton. In 1747 he and his college friends attended a kind of Club, or Debating Society ; and on Friday, the 5th of June, he received the thanks of the Society for appropriately declaiming, in character, the celebrated speech of Moloch, the fiercest spirit that fought in Heaven. The assembly then proceeded to discuss some objections to the “No ! let us all at once” in this fine address ; but

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 12.

† Walpole, George III., vol. ii. p. 273.

‡ Works, vol. iv. p. 425.

the opinion to which they unanimously came as to the redundancy of these words is not very defensible. The criticism of this society, like that of most juvenile clubs, originated in a narrow spirit. The meritorious editor who first quoted the curious extract from its minutes hazarded the opinion that Burke's oratory may have been suggested by Milton's poetry.* Now, much as the Statesman loved the verse of the great Bard who sang of man's first disobedience, and all his consequent woes, there cannot be a greater contrast than between the stern conciseness of Milton's blank verse and the luxuriant diffusiveness of Burke's literary and oratorical compositions. Some of the great speeches which Shakespeare has put into the mouths of his characters, and which are more eloquent than any other specimens of oratory in the English language, or perhaps in any other language, have even more resemblance to Burke's style of eloquence than have the speeches of Milton's fallen angels.

But Burke most certainly did not perfect his oratory by studying Shakespeare. That enthusiastic veneration for the great Dramatist, which is now so common, was not seen in Burke. He speaks of him, indeed, occasionally as one of our greatest poets; but he shows no cordial appreciation of Shakespeare's transcendent superiority over the rest of dramatists and writers, although he was so little inclined to echo the fashionable sentiments of his time, was so original and profound in many of his judgments, and had himself in many respects such a true Shakespearian spirit. When he defended against Johnson the paradox that though Homer was a greater poet than Virgil, yet the *Aeneid* was a greater poem than the *Iliad*, he was indeed expressing his deliberate opinion, not only

* Dr. Todd.

because it was never his habit to argue, as Johnson confessed he did, merely for the sake of argument, but also because it coincides with the evidence of his poetical taste which his works afford. On the appearance of Ossian, he greeted this alleged song of the Son of Fingal with more applause than he ever bestowed on Shakespeare.*

In the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, Burke quotes many passages from Milton as fine illustrations of the sublime; but he does not appear to have been sensible of the very different kind of sublimity, the sublimity of thought, the sublimity of passion, which can only be found thoroughly intensified by sorrow and suffering in Lear, Hamlet, and Othello. He seems utterly insensible to what may most justly be called the moral sublime.

As this Essay was one of the earliest productions, it is likely to indicate, better than any conjecture or report, his general course of study in these years. It will be found to confirm the idea that has just been given of his general reading and his literary tastes. The three principal authors from whom he takes his examples are Homer, Virgil, and Milton. Virgil is alluded to on nine different occasions. Homer and Milton are each mentioned seven times. Shakespeare is only quoted twice. In the Hints for an Essay on the Drama, a very slight piece, which was probably written very soon after he left college, and was certainly composed long before he had any thought of becoming a politician, the authors alluded to are La Fontaine, Boccaccio, Molière, Virgil, Homer, and Aristotle. Shakespeare's name never once occurs.

* See the Annual Register for 1761, p. 276.

Yet Burke then and always took much interest in the stage. A long letter from his pen is said to be in existence, giving an interesting account of the riots in the Dublin Theatre, in which it has been reported that he, with other students of Trinity College, took a leading part in defence of the manager.* As this document has never yet been published, nor indeed any extract ever been quoted from it, its existence may be doubted ; but the report of his having taken part in these disturbances is not of recent date, nor is it in itself unlikely.

The Irish stage, when Burke first commenced his studies at Trinity College, was in the lowest state of demoralization. The players were regarded as outcasts from society. Their scenes were wantonly cut, their dresses torn, and their women outraged, without their having any chance of obtaining redress. These gross abuses Sheridan manfully undertook to reform ; and in his war against them suffered the fate of most earnest reformers. The manager raised against himself a powerful faction, who hissed him off the stage, obliged him to confine himself to his house, and to suspend for some days all performance. The ostensible grievance, of which those who called themselves gentlemen complained, was a mere cloak under which might be displayed all the malicious hatred of rival exhibitors, disappointed poets who had had their plays rejected, and debauched men about town who had lost their favourite place of intrigue and gallantry. At a performance of Rowe's Fair Penitent, which being for a charity it was hoped would be permitted to proceed without interruption, the decisive conflict occurred between the manager, supported by the Governors of the Hospital, the students of the College, and

* Prior.

most of the respectable part of Dublin society on one side, and the discontented faction, represented by some thirty noisy individuals in the pit, on the other. One student distinguished himself highly by his support of the manager, and his chivalrous protection of the ladies, who were terrified at the tumultuous scene. As an apple was thrown at him, and he was violently abused, the whole University considered itself insulted in the person of their member; and on the next day the students made the ringleaders ask pardon on their bended knees for the scurrilous expressions which they had thrown out against the Provost and the Institution. To such an extremity did this war proceed between the rioters and the College, that the students provided themselves with defensive arms.*

On the night of the theatrical riot, when the collegians of Trinity became implicated in the contest, a remarkable individual stood up in the pit and rebuked, as one having authority, the knot of his violent countrymen, who were intent on disturbing the performance. This was Charles Lucas, a man whose merits have been little recognized in England, but who was not only the first, but one of the most honest, zealous, and disinterested of Irish patriots. That Burke, as has been said, in these college days ironically imitated the style of Lucas, and carried his principles to a ridiculous extent, as he afterwards did those of a much greater writer, is most improbable; for though he might with extraordinary ingenuity give such a perfect imitation of Bolingbroke's style as to deceive this statesman's friends and admirers themselves, by no human possibility could he have successfully mimicked the

* Dublin in an Uproar, or the Ladies Robbed of their Pleasure. Dublin, 1746-7. Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xvii. p. 123.

style of Lucas. And for the best of all reasons.. It was easier for him to identify himself with a great rhetorician like Bolingbroke, than to imitate successfully the plain writing of a plain man. Lucas wrote in the simple and unstudied manner of a practical politician who wished to render himself intelligible to the populace of Dublin. There was nothing to ridicule in his principles. There was nothing to mimic in his style.

He was on the contrary a good man. His scientific attainments were extensive ; his professional publications had considerable repute in their day ; and though his political tracts were at first directed to mere municipal objects, they were not confined to the abuses in the Dublin Corporation. He was the first Irishman who advocated short parliaments. He prepared the way for that Octennial Bill, from which all the freedom of Ireland dates. His opposition to the profligacy of the Dublin Corporation, extended over nearly the whole period during which Burke was at college. It commenced in 1743, when he first attacked the Board of Aldermen, and concluded, so far as mere municipal abuses were concerned, when in the session of 1749, the Irish House of Commons voted his writings treasonable. Never was there anything more infamous than the persecution under which the honest apothecary suffered ; and in the scale of infamy, the Viceroy, Lord Harrington, stood pre-eminent. Lucas could not have been condemned, had he not listened to some insidious overtures of the Lord Lieutenant, who induced him to go to the Castle, and leave there some writings as his defence, which, by a breach of faith almost incredible, were afterwards produced as evidence against him by the Chief Secretary in the House of Commons. This was the morality of

Irish governors when Burke has been represented as their apologist.*

The national spirit was however rising amid all such baseness, and he might profitably contemplate this great resurrection. The Protestant tradesmen of Dublin, when they condemned the abuses of their officials, were contributing, though quite unconsciously, to the emancipation of their country. They would probably have preferred remaining as they were, than have consented to allow the Catholics a share in the privileges which Lucas was teaching them to demand. But when a step was once made, to retrace it was beyond their power ; and therefore, if the time when Burke first came into the world, was the saddest epoch in all the history of his country, still, before he left home to seek his fortune in England, the first approaches of a better time might be discerned piercing the gloom.

That period had now arrived. His name had been entered at the Middle Temple in 1747 ; he had taken his Bachelor's Degree in 1748 ; and he was to proceed to the English shore.

Already dreams of future eminence had visited him in his solitude. Already as his friends Dennis and Brennan, who were to pass away without leaving any trace of their existence here, praised his verses, the proud thought had frequently occurred that he too might be one of the great men of the world. The last year he spent in Ireland, must have been twelve months of eagerness, impatience, and longing. He would soon be his own master. When seas were rolling between them, his father's anger could give him little vexation. His powers were rapidly expanding, and yearning for their proper

* Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont, vol. i. p. 299.

field of action. He recalled to mind other students who had gone from Trinity College to study in London, and had distinguished themselves in that great English world. There was Henry Brooke, who, like himself, was once an Irish collegian, went, much as he was going, to London, became a prosperous dramatic author, and had a name in England. As Burke read these compositions, he might justly think that he could write as well, nay, perhaps better; and why should not literature do as much for him as for Henry Brooke? Would it not be better to be a great author, than a learned lawyer? Perhaps he might not be a lawyer at all. Perhaps he might be something greater than a mere industrious barrister in Dublin. His father's professional dreams might not be realized; but the son himself would still remain an indisputable reality. Others before him had gone, in obedience to parental admonitions, to seek for trifles, and had gathered invaluable treasures. While looking for oysters, they had discovered pearls. While looking for asses, they had found kingdoms.

The holiday period of farewell visits at last came. He spent some time with his kind friends on the Blackwater;* and the scenes in which his childhood had sped so happily away, were doubtless more endeared to him by the thought of how long it might be before he should see them again. Before he could return, his first great throw in the lottery of life would be decided, and his destiny not indistinctly revealed. But the step of youth is light. Why dream of disappointment and defeat? This young Irishman has a brave heart; his principles are good; even the precise and severe Richard Shackleton admits him to be virtuous and pious. The fire of genius sparkles in

* Letter of Burke, in the New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 381.

his eye. His manly brow defies danger. He has a conscience ; he has a creed ; and when the storm runs highest a star will still shine above him, and keep him from shipwreck on the rocks and quicksands which have destroyed so many noble vessels.

CHAPTER III.

1750-1753.

FIRST YEARS IN LONDON.

HOWEVER pleasant his journey appeared in prospect, as soon as Burke landed on the English shore his heart yearned to the friends he had left behind him, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. Everything was new, and everything strange. Every object which attracted his eye, told him by the mere force of contrast, the melancholy history of his native country. The old halls and modern mansions of the wealthy, the neat villages, and pretty cottages of the poor, the inns like palaces, the industry and animation on all sides, had to the young traveller all the interest of novelty; and he felt deeply the difference between those evidences of civilization and prosperity, and the signs of misery and depression to which he had been so long accustomed in Ireland, where scarcely a cottage had the ornament of a chimney.

When he found himself enveloped in the smoke of London, a sense of the frightful iniquities of the great city very naturally came over one whose principles were so strict, and whose heart was so pure. A dreadful place it would be, thought the young Templar, rejoicing in a simile, were it not for the churches and hospitals, whose turrets rose against the sky, and averted the wrath of Heaven. He was convinced that, however wicked

some of the Londoners might be, there were still in every street many honest men, and many virtuous women. An Englishman appeared to him at first somewhat reserved, but he decidedly improved on acquaintance, performed more than he promised, and remained a faithful friend. The English women were so handsome, and the tones of their voices so soft and pleasing, that a virtuous young Irishman found it hard to keep in the right path when exposed to their alluring glances and musical tongues.*

He went to Westminster, and felt that the House of Commons was as glorious a theatre as Greece or Rome ever afforded for the exhibition of vocal eloquence. He entered the great Abbey, and his heart beat with a peculiar emotion. He stood awestruck by the graves of the illustrious dead. The very silence of the place seemed sacred. He spent hour after hour among the tombs, examining the monuments, musing on the past, and aspiring in the future. The world was bustling around him ; he was alone, a stranger among busy millions ; would the day ever come when he too should rank with the great men who were now calmly sleeping after a life of struggle, and his monument be placed by the side of theirs ?

The sight of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament was delightful to the imaginative and sensitive student. A closer view of the Court, Senate, and fashionable world, would not, at first sight, have raised them in his estimation. We can now look more narrowly at the men of that time than the young Irish Templar, who, with many high hopes and ambitious longings, for he knew not as yet what, paced, in the early months of 1750, the streets of London, and sated

* Letter from Burke to Mr. Matthew Smith, quoted in Prior, p. 32.

his eager eyes with looking on the objects about which he had long dreamed.

The old King, George II., was residing at Kensington with his Countess of Yarmouth. French and German were the two languages spoken in the palace ; the dear native accents of England seldom fell upon the ear. Year after year, with the first approach of summer, the Monarch eagerly divested himself of the Majesty of England, and assumed, what he so much more highly prized, that of a petty German Prince. Year after year, as soon as Parliament was prorogued in April, the King crossed the seas in his yachts, and the fair realm of Great Britain and Ireland was abandoned to the care of a council of courtiers. The Sovereign seldom returned to England again until the meeting of Parliament in November, and even then his heart remained in his Electorate.

The heir-apparent to the Crown deserved even less than his royal father, the devoted loyalty of a high-minded and patriotic people. It has been the custom to ascribe all good qualities to a Prince of Wales ; yet flattery itself found it hard to say that Prince Frederick possessed a single virtue.

A strange scene was then being acted at Carlton House. If Burke could have caught a glimpse of the curious Diary in which George Bubb Dodington was complacently recording his own infamy, because he believed it to be the purest virtue, and therefore did not hesitate to ask the blessing of the Almighty on his endeavours, he might indeed have shuddered at the corruptions of courtiers and politicians. Dodington's prayer to The Father of Mercy for success at court, is, without exception, the most ludicrous appeal that was ever addressed to the Deity by a sordid politician, who, with all his desires

fixed on the earth, confidently presumed to raise his eyes to Heaven.* Tartuffe was at least conscious of his own hypocrisy. But Dodington's baseness becomes even sublime, for he never seems to have doubted that he was eminently good, and that the world would be of the same opinion. This man, and the rest of the toad-eaters at the Prince's table, were eager for the new era which they expected soon to begin. The death of George II. was anxiously anticipated. Frederick and his worthy associates had every measure which was to be taken on the death of his father, fully discussed and settled. Many offices of state were promised, and had even been kissed hands for.† But a Ruler to whom the princes of this world are of small account, had decreed that Prince Frederick should never reign over England. Yet another year: and all these imaginary secretaries of state, lords of the treasury, attorney- and solicitor-generals, who, a few days before, had fallen at the feet of the poor scion of Royalty, asked him to spit upon them, and had even actually lent him their money, would desert his lifeless remains, again be humbly courting the old King's favourites, and throwing themselves in his way at Kensington.‡

The Prince of Wales could only have been despised; his younger brother, the Duke of Cumberland, was some-

* "Father of Mercy! Thy hand that wounds, alone can cure!"—Doddington's Diary, March 21, 1750.

† *Ibid., passim.*

‡ "The Solicitor-general entered into a detail of my affairs with much affection, and said that there was not the least indisposition towards me in the Ministry, but was afraid that the King had been strongly prejudiced against me personally; that he would take it upon him to bring the matter to an issue one way or another, as it was by no means fitting that I should offer, or ask for anything, till I was sure of being well received. The event is with God!"—*Ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1752.

was interesting here. The party he had shown us, however, had nothing but the reputation of The Duke, and though the Duke of Wellington in his opinion is the greatest general in the history of England, yet the Duke of Bedford is regarded as the second son of George II., who has no claim to express a man's gratitude for a wife who had successfully crossed the borders of a country and ruined it. But when peculiar anticipations are entertained as to the future, but always reasonable: in the Royal Family, the character of the Duke of Bedford was certainly the most objectionable. He was a braggard, a difficult subject, and a conscientious man.

As His Royal Highness was the friend of the Duke of Bedford, he became the terror of the Duke of Newcastle. These two noblemen were the two rival Secretaries of State. The fullest house and the greatest division of the nation was on a Turnpike Bill, which being supported by the Duke of Bedford, was of course strongly opposed by the Duke of Newcastle, whose restless and mischievous energy was then entirely directed to the removal of his rival from the Cabinet. The prudent moderation of Henry Pelham, the First Lord of the Treasury, was frequently required to restrain the fretful effervescence of his brother, the Duke of Newcastle.

Pelham has had a more enviable fortune than almost any other Prime Minister in English history. No faction has had the least interest in vilifying his character; and men of the most opposite principles have ungrudgingly allowed his merits. He had great merits. Trained in the school of Walpole, he had many of the excellencies of his master, and was free from some of Sir Robert's glaring defects. He was as moderate in exercising his

authority, and more indulgent to the opinions of his colleagues. He provoked no opposition by an all-engrossing ambition ; he was always ready, by submissive conduct, to make an enemy his friend ; and the world saw, during his government, what was then a strange and unexpected sight, a statesman retain his popularity after he had acquired power. Quiet, decorous, sincere, distrustful of himself, but always anxious to do well, more desirous of diminishing the public burdens than the most extravagant declaimer on the opposition benches, he was, according to his measure, a safe, wise, patriotic, and honest minister. He was at this time prosecuting the great financial triumph of his administration, the reduction of the interest on the national debt. This measure he at last successfully and ably accomplished, and, though it may seem of little importance on comparing it with the vast financial operations of this century, then justly excited the admiration and envy of all Europe. Unlike most Ministers, he was more inclined to depreciate than exaggerate the public resources. In his speech at the commencement of the Session he declared that England was quite unequal to contend with France on equal terms ; but this prophecy was singularly falsified only a few years later, when, in the administration of his own brother, the power of England, wielded by Pitt, struck the House of Bourbon into the dust.

Pitt was Paymaster of the Forces. The great orator was acting a very subdued part. He was professedly the friend, confidant, and adviser of both the Pelhams, who opened their hearts to him, and on all occasions spoke of him in the highest terms. Whenever one brother was offended with the other, Pitt was the mediator between them, and there was only too frequent an oc-

casion for his good offices. He was closely connecting himself with the Duke of Newcastle, who in return at last prevailed upon the King to speak politely to the repentant Paymaster at the levee. But the assiduous attentions of such a man to such a Duke, whose character he must have known then as well as at any subsequent period, appears scarcely more admirable than those of Sandwich to his Grace of Cumberland, who was then amusing himself by hunting and gaming, and therefore the careful courtier endeavoured to combine both pursuits at once by carrying a dice-box in his pocket, so that whenever the hounds were at fault the pair might be seen throwing a main under the trees.*

The opposition was led by Lord Egmont, a fluent but vapid speaker, who was ready to say anything at a moment's notice without any regard to principle, appearances, or common-sense. Of course, in his opinion, the country was ruined. The people were sinking under the burden of taxation, though the total amount of all grants for the year was little more than twelve millions. The French were rivalling us in all our colonies; the Spanish, the American, the East Indian trade would soon be entirely at their mercy. An opposition of this kind was not likely to be formidable to any Minister. Many of the Tories still imagined themselves Jacobites, and were inclined to bolt at the mere whisper of Revolution principles. But those country gentlemen who were ready enough to drink and hunt for the Stuarts, had no inclination to die for the unfortunate race. When the Highlanders had advanced to Derby, the fox-hunting squires who had been blustering Jacobitism all their lives, kept themselves at home, and had not the courage

* Walpole's Letters to Sir Horace Mann, vol. ii. (First Series.)

to make one manly venture for that cause which they daily made themselves drunk in toasting. But when Prince Charles Edward and his army had retreated to the mountains, when the blood of his most devoted adherents had been remorselessly shed on the field of Culloden, and when Kilmarnock and Balmerino had suffered by the hand of the executioner on Tower Hill, those men were not content with passing their glasses over their water decanters, nor even with wearing tartan hunting-coats, but they actually went so far as to dress their hounds also in tartan, and to ride hurrahing after a red fox. There was nothing of the generous loyalty of the old Cavaliers in the breast of these last despicable supporters of hereditary right. The poor deluded Prince, who there is good evidence for believing to have been in the September of this year in London, might well, on seeing with his own eyes that all was lost, fly from the kingdom of his ancestors in deep despair, and drink himself to death in his Italian retreat.

Thus, in 1750, Jacobitism was finally departing, with no hope of a future revival. The great blessing of an undisputed succession was about to be added to many other blessings at this time bestowed on England.

The marks of improvement were everywhere seen. Noblemen were busy adorning their estates, repairing their ancestral palaces, and pulling down their clumsy park-walls. which had excluded, from the sight of the passing stranger, so many fine English prospects. Large tracts of ground were being laid out in gardens and shrubberies. The geometrical symmetry which the Revolution had introduced from Holland, and which seemed to have banished with the Stuarts all that was natural in gardening and architecture, was now giving way to

a wilder and more romantic style. Horace Walpole was collecting painted glass and old armour, for the curious edifice he was about to construct at Strawberry Hill; and the taste for Gothic, which that structure so powerfully influenced, had begun to spread. Buildings of a Chinese fashion, such as had not been seen in England, were also rising. An excellent judge wrote to a friend, who had been some years out of England, that he would now scarcely recognize the country of his youth.*

On every side the industrious energies of the British people were expanding. The manufacturers were busy. Higher wages than had ever yet been known were given. The masters complained that the men could command their own terms. A Parliamentary grant was made to Glasgow, as an indemnification for the loss the city had sustained during the late Rebellion; and from this period dates the wonderful prosperity of that and other great commercial towns. There were, indeed, amid all this dawning prosperity, many great moral and social blotches on the surface of English society, that only looked more hideous from the fair scenes with which they were encompassed.

The population was ignorant and prejudiced to an almost incredible extent. The people indiscriminately hated the Jews, hated the French, hated the Protestant Dissenters, and hated the Roman Catholics. The civil disabilities still remained. Parliament gave a legislatorial sanction to the foulest abuse of modern civilization: the horrible traffic in human flesh was flourishing as it never before had flourished on the coast of Guinea. Forty-six thousand negroes were yearly torn from their homes and sold into the English plantations; and the enlightened

* Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, vol. ii. pp. 323, 344.

legislators of liberal England were engaged in considering how this noble branch of commerce could be extended.*

Never were the prisons so crowded as at this time. It is always found that at the close of a war, when soldiers and sailors are disbanded, and before society has subsided into the pacific habits which it had thrown aside, and commerce returned to that natural channel which had been violently dammed up, a fearful amount of crime and wretchedness is produced. This was particularly the case after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. As yet there was no John Howard to pry into the dungeons, to fathom the depths of human misery, and to discover what moral vermin were rotting within the prison-walls. In this very year Newgate was so full that a terrible infectious distemper broke out, and the Lord Mayor, an Alderman, an Exchequer lawyer, a Judge of the Common Pleas, several barristers, and many jurymen, all died of the disease.

There were probably more highwaymen at this time than in any earlier period of our history. The roads were infested with discarded warriors, who, being prevented from making war on the French, now levied war on their countrymen. At noonday, in Hyde Park, and even in Piccadilly, carriages were stopped, and pistols presented at the breasts of the most fashionable people. Lady Albemarle, Miss Pelham, Mrs. Talbot, Sir Thomas Robinson, Lord Eglinton, and Horace Walpole, all suffered from the depredations of a single highwayman, M'Lean, who was this year taken and executed. So eager were persons of all classes to see him, that three thousand persons visited him one day after his condemnation, and he fainted away three times in his cell from

* Walpole to Sir Horace Mann.

the oppressive heat of the staring multitude. An extraordinary proclamation of one hundred pounds reward was issued by the Government for the apprehension of every highwayman. It was not safe to venture out after dark. Travellers were armed in broad daylight as though they were going to battle.

The criminal law, merciless in itself in respect to the most trifling offences, was as mercilessly administered. Executions were of daily occurrence. On one morning seventeen persons suffered by the hands of the hangman. The civil law was almost as unrelenting as the criminal code. A power of almost perpetual imprisonment was held by the creditor, who was thus made in his own cause both party and judge. As Burke, on his way to his chambers, passed under Temple Bar, and contemplated this interesting memorial of another age, he must have shuddered ; for the heads and limbs of traitors were still exposed on spikes above the archway, and looked black and ghastly in the sun.

But highway robberies and executions were not the only means of excitement to the Londoners of this year. There were wild prophecies and alarming convulsions of nature, such as England had yet little known. The first days in February were as sultry as the hottest days in June ; thunder and lightning were frequent ; and on the eighth of the month the first shock of an earthquake was felt throughout London and Westminster. On the same day in the next month the inhabitants were awakened from their slumbers by their pillows rising, their bells ringing, and a strange rumbling as of carriage-wheels. It was said that Sir Isaac Newton had foretold that there would be a great change at this time, and had expressed a wish that he could live to see the phenomenon. As

the second shock had occurred exactly a month after the first, it was affirmed that earthquakes were now to be periodical in England; and a mad Life-Guardsman prophesied that the next shock, which was punctually to take place on the 8th of April, would swallow up the Metropolis. The panic now became general. On the day before that of the anticipated calamity, the roads were crowded with the carriages of the fashionable and the wealthy, hastening out of the devoted capital. Seven hundred and thirty coaches passed Hyde Park Corner that morning. Women made themselves flannel wrappers, which they called earthquake-gowns, in order to sit up all night in the open air. Not a bed could be procured in Windsor. All the lanes and fields in the neighbourhood of London were blocked up with carriages, carts, and other vehicles, full of people of all ranks, waiting with trembling anxiety until the dreaded hour had passed. They then returned laughing and exulting to the town, to resume, as though their lives would never terminate, the same pleasures and the same occupations in which they had for one moment been disturbed.*

Yet above all this vice, frivolity, dissipation, cruelty, and neglect, the high destiny of England towered pre-eminent. The American colonies had, during the late war, distinguished themselves by their attachment to the mother country; but no minister comprehended the mighty meaning of that one word, America. The state of the English colonies, where great cities were being founded, and a mighty commerce, second only to that of this country, was being fostered even by neglect, never employed the thoughts of the little factions in Kensington Palace and at Carlton House. Nor is this

* Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xx. p. 184.

much to be regretted. Human wisdom has not much to do with the foundation of great empires. Although the Duke of Newcastle, when Colonial Minister, left the despatches unopened in his office, this method of government was as beneficial as the industrious energy which the Earl of Halifax, as President of the Board of Trade, was then applying to colonial affairs; and infinitely superior to that of the meddling Ministers who succeeded him, and, by their pertinacious pedantry and ministerial officiousness, goaded the American people into rebellion.

As yet there was peace in the forest. But strange words had been heard from the pulpit of young Mahew, in Massachusetts. Some half-inaudible murmurs had already come from the lips of those who had suffered from the new regulations of the Board of Trade. George Grenville was a Lord of the Treasury, and Lord North about to become Tutor to Prince George. Franklin was prosecuting his electrical experiments at Philadelphia, and Washington was growing up to manhood amid the woods of Virginia.

In another part of the world, two companies of European merchants were forgetting, in mutual rivalry, the merely commercial objects of their institutions. The French and English were supporting different branches of the Imperial Dynasty of India, and would shortly contend for a prize, which was nothing less than the mighty empire of the Moguls. The political intrigues of these times appear indeed contemptible, when we consider what great things were about to be accomplished without such designs for once entering the imaginations of the professional politicians and greedy courtiers who were bent on acquiring wealth and honours at St. James's.

A poor writer, called Robert Clive, was finally abandoning his civil employment for the profession of arms, for which he already displayed a remarkable aptitude; and a friendless orphan, of the name of Warren Hastings, was setting out on his first voyage to Bengal.

On looking over Europe, the apostles of revolution might be seen already qualifying themselves for their ministry. The weapons of destruction were being sharpened; portents of fearful augury were already in the heavens. Voltaire was about to quit Paris on his inauspicious journey to the King of Prussia, which at least demonstrated the fact, that between the philosophy of the eighteenth century and the self-love of the greatest of its Kings, there was a natural antagonism, that no oaths and protestations of mutual alliance and appreciation could possibly remove. In France, Montesquieu had published his *Spirit of Laws*, and shown his countrymen, whose vanity was easily wounded, that there were other forms of government in the world besides that of the French despotism, and some which might even be superior to that gorgeous royalty. They who attacked and they who defended Montesquieu's book, equally contributed to the great result to which the mind of France was tending. Diderot and D'Alembert were commencing their *Encyclopædia*. Rousseau was, in contending for a provincial literary prize, to give indications both to the world and to himself of his paradoxical spirit, and of the great powers with which he had been endowed. Mirabeau was an infant in short frocks; and some of the revolutionists, at whose deeds Burke and all Europe were to stand aghast, were already in long clothes.

While the higher classes of France were then entering

on the path which was to lead them they knew not whither, the humbler classes of England were going in an exactly contrary direction. The nation, beyond its fashionable precincts, was, in spite of the Bedfords and Newcastles, Dodingtons and Sandwiches, becoming thoroughly in earnest. The loungers at White's might sneer at the Methodists; but when the tears rolled down the cheeks of the humble colliers at Kingswood, as they listened to Whitfield's exhortations, it was as much a sign of social health and national prosperity, as were high wages and cheap food. By this time, the Gospel of good tidings had, by the exertions of Wesley, been sent through all the villages of England; and the miserable outcasts, who, in the sight of our magnificent cathedrals, had been allowed to burrow like wild beasts, first learnt the name of the Redeemer.

Literature too, the fit handmaid of religion, was becoming more direct in her teachings. The first Rambler was published on Tuesday, the 20th of March, and was continued on every succeeding Tuesday and Saturday. These papers, which Johnson sent forth from his humble dwelling in Gough-square, are now neglected, and by some readers and critics actually despised; but the influence which they had on the second half of the eighteenth century, speaks uncontestedly of the genuine goodness of the English heart, which instinctively opens to what is addressed to it in truth and sincerity. Life was now appearing to Johnson in brighter colours, though the sombre hue which it had so long worn, still saddened many a page of his new periodical. He had lately founded a social Club in Ivy-lane, that afterwards gave rise to a still more famous one, of which both he and Burke were to be the principal members. Johnson was

also, by the engagement on his Dictionary, raised for the present above absolute want; and he had just written a preface to Lauder's impudent forgeries.

The indignation of the young student, on learning that his favourite author had been accused of wholesale plagiarism, may be easily imagined. He would be not unwilling to respond to Johnson's somewhat compunctionous appeal in the General Advertiser, and hurrying to Drury Lane on the 5th of April, contribute his mite for the benefit of Milton's granddaughter, see Garrick perform, and hear him deliver the impressive prologue, by the author of Irene. Garrick had now become a married man, and, as the manager of Drury Lane, had commenced his keen rivalry with Rich and Covent Garden.

This was indeed a busy world. How could it be expected that an ambitious young Irishman could settle down quietly to study law when there was so much to occupy his mind beyond the precincts of the Middle Temple? Excuses for idleness were not wanting. His health suffered from the effects of his metropolitan existence. Pining for the fresh air of the country, he became an invalid and a traveller: two characters to whom, as he himself informed Richard Shackleton, great allowances should be made. His quiet observations of provincial life must have been of great advantage to him in forming a correct estimate of the English character: and a knowledge of the character of the people he aspires to govern, Burke would himself have declared to be the first and most indispensable qualification for a legislator. In the summer of 1751 the address of the future statesman was for some weeks at Mr. Hipkis's, ironmonger, in Monmouth.*

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 26.

Here, his health having been first renovated by the sea-breezes at Bristol, he spent some weeks much to his satisfaction. It appears that then, and for some years afterwards, he laboured under an affection of the chest, which gave him much anxiety, and induced his father for a time to sanction his excursions. Bristol, which he was one day to represent, and give such a memorable lesson as to what a Member of Parliament ought to be, was his constant resource. He was accompanied by William Burke, of whom so much will have to be said, and who was so devoted to his friend and relative.

At Monmouth the two companions were the cause of much speculation. Their adventures would have filled a novel. The most innocent occupation the inhabitants could suppose them engaged in was that of fortune-hunting; but when they left the place without carrying away wives with them, they were set down for French spies. There then was little intercourse between the different parts of England. A stranger was stared at like a wild beast in a menagerie. An unknown face set all the gossiping tongues of the town to wag.

The young men, however, thought little of the townspeople. They had work to do which required many years of labour. Burke was in a state of transition. He had awoke from his poetical hallucinations, and this was an important advance in self-knowledge. He felt that Providence had destined him for something else; what it was, however, continued still a mystery. The law appeared to him dry and unintelligible, and he was floundering helplessly in its meshes. That after he had abandoned his poetical delusion he had fallen into a still greater one, the truth of which must now be considered, there is nothing in his correspondence to show; and the

strongest proof would be required to establish what is intrinsically so improbable.

The letter, from which this account of his movements is derived, was written in the August of 1751. It will throw some light on his future proceedings, and assist in setting right one important circumstance in his early history, which has been the cause of much perplexity. He has been represented as becoming a candidate for the Professorship of Logic in the University of Glasgow, when this chair was vacated by Adam Smith, who succeeded Professor Craigie in that of Moral Philosophy. For the vacant chair David Hume is well known to have been a competitor; and many people have wondered that such men as Hume and Burke should both have been rejected, and a Mr. James Clow, of whom no man now knows anything, been the successful candidate. As a means of advancing his pretensions, it has been said that Burke first sketched the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, and laid in a stock of metaphysical knowledge.* Another version of the same story is, that being in Scotland at the time, he was passing by the old gateway of the college, and seeing the announcement of the candidateship posted on the walls, immediately took the resolution of offering himself as a suitable person to fill the coveted office. Dr. Bisset affirmed, and his statement has been followed by his successors, that Burke was induced to put forward his claim by remembering how Hutcheson, who like himself was an Irishman, and connected with Trinity College, obtained in 1729 the same professorship.

The story is unsupported by a shadow of evidence. There is not a single allusion in his Works and Correspondence indicating that Burke ever was in Scotland

* Bisset's Life of Burke, vol. i. p. 32. Prior, p. 37.

until more than a quarter of a century after the time when this vacancy occurred. The fanciful analogy between Hutcheson and himself, so far from confirming the report, is sufficient to demonstrate its essential absurdity. When Francis Hutcheson was invited to occupy a chair in Glasgow University, he was already one of the most distinguished metaphysicians of his age. He had published works which had made his name known wherever metaphysics were studied. His friends were among the most powerful men in the three Kingdoms; and nothing was more natural than that he should have been requested to occupy a post for which he had shown such eminent qualifications. Now at the time when Burke is supposed to have aspired to fill such a distinguished office in a Scotch University, he was an obscure youth with few friends and no celebrity. He had published no great works. He had written nothing but a few verses, of which he was himself ashamed. His claims on the Glasgow University were only those of any law-student at the Temple. It does not appear that he had a single acquaintance in Scotland; and he had no influential friends either in England or Ireland. Even his academical career at Trinity College had been anything but distinguished. What probability is there that he should at such an age have presumed to offer himself as a candidate for a professor's chair, which the most celebrated philosophers had filled, and for which even David Hume, though supported by Adam Smith and many friends, was unsuccessful?

If ever there was a man whose authority on this question should be decisive, it was Adam Smith. He was the professor whose chair had become vacant. He was interested in getting a friend appointed; yet he never

heard the name of Burke mentioned as that of any candidate, and always declared his belief of the story being totally without any foundation in fact. He even went further. He accounted for the prevalence of the notion in a manner at once so simple and so satisfactory, that it is really surprising how any one should still remain convinced of the truth of what is in itself so unlikely. He told Dugald Stewart, who fully agreed with him in discrediting the report, that he suspected it arose from an opinion which he had himself expressed on the publication of the *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, that if the author of such a work would accept of a chair, he would be a valuable addition to the College.

From this visionary basis, the gradual rise of the fabric of error may be clearly observed. It may have been whispered that the author was an Irishman, and a student of Trinity College. His book must have been mentioned with Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, which certainly suggested the title, and probably the whole subject of the *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Years passed on : the author of this treatise became a statesman, whose name was familiarly in the mouths of all men. Then the report that the great Edmund Burke had been rejected for the chair of Logic at Glasgow, began to be mentioned by those who knew that he was the author of the metaphysical works which had been years before coupled with one of Hutcheson's, when the two philosophical Irishmen had been associated by Smith's suggestion, which was only dimly remembered afterwards, because at the time, the importance of it had been little understood. When once the story had taken its definite form, it was too good a one not to be

cherished ; and it has occasioned philosophical dialogues, barbed epigrams, and become the moral and ornament of tales.

This reasonable hypothesis can be supported by undoubted facts. A year elapsed before Burke again wrote to Shackleton. He then apologizes for not having answered his friend's letter, which he received twelve months before at Monmouth, and gives him an account of his movements in the interval. Burke says, "I spent part of the winter, that is the term-time, in London, and part in Croydon, in Surrey. About the beginning of summer, finding myself attacked by my old complaint, I went once more to Bristol, and found the same benefit." Here is a direct statement of his places of residence during the very months when he has been represented as travelling in Scotland, and busied in the pursuit of the Glasgow professorship. An extract containing this portion of Burke's letter, was published by Mr. Prior, who shortly afterwards stated that Burke was a candidate when Mr. James Clow was chosen, though the exact period was uncertain. But this, in itself, fixes the date; for whatever vagueness there may be in the report of Burke's competitorship, it is certain that it was in the November of 1751 that the chair became vacant to which Mr. James Clow succeeded.* And even supposing it were true, as Mr. Prior asserts, that the statement was seen by Burke himself, in print, and not contradicted, all who are aware of how many other errors regarding his life, and which we now know to be false, must have been heard and read by him, without receiving any positive contradiction from himself, would hesitate to accept his

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 14; Burton's Life of Hume, vol. i. p. 350; Thomson's Life of Cullen, pp. 72, 73.

silence as a confirmation of the fact. Indeed the rumour is of itself so vague, so unsubstantial, and intrinsically so improbable, that nothing but the general currency it has acquired, and the manner in which it has been received without any examination, could excuse any one for dwelling upon it, when there are so many important points involved in Burke's history requiring the most patient attention and the most ample illustration.

Burke must then be considered at this time, not as an aspiring metaphysician, desirous of delivering lectures at the University of Glasgow, but as a young Templar, in delicate health, fond of jaunting about England, fond of literature, and anything but fond of law. When he wrote the letter from which the last extract was taken, he was at Turlaine, accompanied as usual, with William Burke. They created there, as great sensation as in Monmouth. All the inhabitants felt themselves especially interested in finding out the business of the two young strangers. At first, they were ingeniously supposed to be authors, because they read so many books ; then they were set down as merchants, because they received so many letters ; and at last they were believed to be Spanish spies, because they paid attention to the manufacture of the fine cloth for which Turlaine was distinguished.

The two young men heartily enjoyed the curiosity of the good townspeople. Their landlady, an old Jacobite, who, having seen better days, dated all her misfortunes from the accession of the House of Hanover, afforded them particular amusement. To show her confidence in her lodgers, and taking credit for her diplomacy, she said to them, "I believe you be gentlemen, but I asks no questions." A jolly parson who arrived at the same

time, and was equally a stranger, was not exposed to the same suspicions. As he was ready to get drunk with the townspeople at all hours, to join in their scandal, and to partake of all their amusements, he was at once accepted as an eminently honest man. The inhabitants were all hearty Jacobites, "a sort of people," says Burke, who thus evinces his own attachment to the House of Hanover, and his own tolerant sentiments, "whose politics consist in wishing that right may take place; and their religion, in heartily hating Presbyterians."* He had already, too, begun to look upon the operations of trade and manufacture with much curiosity; for he informs Shackleton that little girls of Turlaine work at the wheel, and can earn three-and-sixpence a week. He was pleased with the signs of prosperity which everywhere met his eyes. The country was populous, and the people busy, the landscape pleasantly diversified with hills and woods, while distant villages with their church-steeple, of which six might be counted from one point of view, gratified the stranger's taste for the picturesque.

After the glimpse of Burke, as he is observing curiously the provincial life of England, with its waning Jacobitism, jovial parsons, drunken squires, staring vulgar, and laborious population, and the unmistakable indications of that manufacturing industry which had taken root, and was about to strike forth with such gigantic shoots, we lose sight of him for nearly two years. But in a rising genius, the mere fact that little is known of his youth, is quite as frequently a sign of good as of evil. It is a symptom of mental health and vigour, and must generally be the attendant on the formation of a truly

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 16.

great character. The precocious energy and restless desire for distinction, which are sometimes shown by eminent men in youth, are not seldom mischievous in their effects, by preventing the mind from attaining that full development to which, in a quiet solitude, it might naturally grow. It is in the shade, and not in the sunshine, that all the hardy virtues expand. To the really great intellects of the world, early notoriety is no blessing, and a long obscurity no curse. The two first of Burke's avowed productions were so splendidly matured as to speak sufficiently of the many studious hours he must have spent, and of which no other record remains.

CHAPTER IV.

1753-1756.

WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

But what of the law? With all this pleasant roaming over the country, and the quick intelligence which sought everywhere for information, Burke seems to have made no progress in attaining that which was his ostensible object in coming to England. This study gradually became to him as of secondary importance, while to Mr. Burke, in Ireland, it still continued of the first consideration. The dinners in term might be duly eaten, but a mental digestion of the legal folios certainly did not keep pace with the consumption of the hospitable viands, provided with such laudable care by authority for the nourishment of the future barrister. Burke had been three years in England. He was said to have industrious habits. He was not likely to be drawn aside by the mere love of the gaiety and dissipation in a great metropolis. The truth might be veiled for a moment, but it could not but at last become clear to an anxious father's eyes. For a few months the excuses on account of indisposition might be allowed; but as term succeeded term, and bill upon bill was transmitted across the Irish Channel, Mr. Burke, senior, began to have some very serious thoughts.

Many persons since that time have agreed with this

worthy father in thinking it strange that when the usual period had expired Burke did not become a professional lawyer. A mystery has however been made of a very simple matter. Whatever might be the pretence of his residence in England, it may be well doubted whether he ever had any serious intentions of becoming a practising barrister, merely to gratify, at the expense of his future eminence, his father's professional vanity. Humbly as he spoke of himself at all times, and unassumingly as he bore his great intellectual distinctions, nothing is more evident than that throughout his life he was fully conscious of the rank to which he had a just claim among the imperial intellects of the world. That desire of poetical distinction, which during his academical career was so strong within him as to induce him to sacrifice, without repining, all the honours of the University, only subsided as he grew older, better acquainted with himself and with mankind, into the great earnest passion of becoming a benefactor to the world as an author, politician, and philosopher. His knowledge of England, his journeys from place to place, and his miscellaneous reading, fostered this powerful passion more and more, until he proudly determined to march on his own way, and to brave all the grim dragons that are sure to confront one who ventures out of the beaten track, and relies on his own bold spirit for guidance and succour in this stern pilgrimage.

He then abandoned those legal studies which he never loved, and at last abhorred. To appreciate his feelings, and the motives which influenced him in taking this resolution, it is only necessary to recall to mind the numerous passages in his writings alluding to lawyers who are devoted to their profession, and disregard any more

comprehensive considerations. As a political philosopher, he ever speaks of the law as the noblest of sciences, the accumulated experiences of ages; but while showing so much respect for what he calls a second justice, he regrets that this study does not liberalize the mind so much as it sharpens it. On all occasions this was his deliberate opinion. It is seen in the fine sketch of Grenville's character, in his remarks on the lawyers in the French National Assembly, and more particularly in one of his early works, *The Abridgment of English History*. The imperfect *Essay on the Laws of England*, in this abridgment, evidently records, with some modifications, his own experience, and is throughout penned with some degree of bitterness against those who have made such a noble science "a narrow and inglorious study."* He was obviously expressing his own personal impressions, derived from his recent studies at the Middle Temple, though his observations, at first sight, seem merely on the earlier state of the law.† He never returned to it for the pur-

* *Works and Correspondence*, vol. vi. p. 367.

† "That which should be the leading science in every well-ordered commonwealth, remained in all the barbarism of the rudest times, whilst every other advanced by rapid steps to the highest improvement both in solidity and elegance; insomuch that the study of our jurisprudence presented to liberal and well-educated minds, even in the best authors, hardly anything but barbarous terms ill-explained, a coarse but not a plain expression, and indigested method and a species of reasoning the very refuse of the schools, which deduced the spirit of law not from original justice or legal conformity, but from causes foreign to it and altogether whimsical. Young men were sent away with an incurable, and, if we regard the manner of handling rather than the substance, a very well-founded disgust. The famous antiquary, Spelman, though no man was better formed for the most laborious pursuits, in the beginning deserted the study of the law in despair, though he returned to it again when a more confirmed age and a strong desire of knowledge enabled him to wrestle with every difficulty."

pose of qualifying himself for the profession ; but how finely his intellect could work upon it is proved by the Report on the Lords' Journals about the proceedings on the trial of Hastings, which is allowed by the best judges to stand alone as a masterly criticism on the law of evidence.*

This Report ought at least to have preserved him from the reproach of any lawyer for employing his mental powers in the wide field over which he ranged with such wonderful ability. But a harsh and narrow criticism, which even at this day it is not easy to read without indignation, appeared thirty years ago in the pages of a leading quarterly Review. A popular barrister and liberal politician thought fit to look down scornfully from the heights of his Nisi Prius glory, and sneer at Burke's memory, because he did not fill his pockets with fees and become rich by his volubility. The charitable reviewer said that Mr. Burke was not to be pitied for being poor in his old-age, that he brought his poverty on himself, that he might have earned his living in an honest calling rather than have been dependent on the degrading obligations of private friendship, or on the precarious supplies of public munificence. "It is certain," added the critic, "that Mr. Burke chose rather to eat the bitter fruit of both these bakings than to taste the sweet, the exquisite fruit of regular industry. Hence he was a politician by trade, a professional statesman."

These elevating sentiments ought to be preserved. They perhaps afford in themselves incontestable evidence of that narrow sharpness which Burke declared to be often the distinguishing characteristic of professional lawyers. If he did not taste the comely, the sweet, the exquisite fruit

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xlviii. p. 463.

of regular industry, it was only that without any reward or any thanks he laboured for the public and not for himself. Though the ordinary duties of a Member of Parliament may be compatible with assiduous attention to a private profession, it is certain that Burke could never have combined professional labours with his political career. In such a man this is a public, not a private consideration. For himself, living in the world and doing the work he had to do in the world, whether he had a few thousand pounds a year, more or less, is now of no consequence. But for the public that is enjoying the splendid inheritance which his genius has left as the indefeasible property of all mankind, it was surely better that he voluntarily pursued his uncheered and unrequited labours than if he had merely exerted his abilities in courts of law for his private benefit. Those purely public exertions, though they did not put money into his purse, accomplished what gold can never purchase, and taught us lessons that wealth can never teach.

Boswell says that Johnson in his old-age regretted on one occasion that he had not been brought up a lawyer, and had a chance of being a Lord Chancellor. If Johnson in an unguarded moment did envy Thurlow, the world will think that there was little reason for such envy. The uncouth moralist was probably a wiser and better man in his garret, among his dusty books, than he might have been if all the lawyers of Westminster Hall had trooped after him, eagerly watched every expression of his face, laughed at his jests, and trembled at his scowl. And Burke it may be did more good to mankind, and kept his moral sensibility at a higher pitch, by those arduous labours for which he personally received no emolument, and in consequence had poverty for his constant com-

panion throughout his life, than if, with little legal knowledge but much fluency of language and much dexterous versatility, he had become the most prominent barrister and the most vehement popular tribune of the day, then have skilfully taken advantage of a political crisis to obtain the Chancellorship and a Peerage, afterwards have enjoyed for a quarter of a century a comfortable retiring salary as an ex-Chancellor, and have sneered at the most laborious man of genius that has been ever known, for not working with his own interests so steadily in view.

But Mr. Burke, senior, in 1753, knew nothing of the powerful instinct which was leading his son far out of the narrow track of professional routine. Of the dispensation of Providence, and of his son's future, he had no idea. If he did not entirely stop the supplies, they now were granted grudgingly and sparingly; and to literature Burke began to look for his means of subsistence.

Nor was he meanly qualified for this authorship by profession. If he had not studied thoroughly any single department of human knowledge, his reading had extended over an immense surface. Poetry, history, politics, metaphysics, with many decided opinions on men and things, were comprised in his literary outfit. Other young Irishmen, whose abilities could not be compared with his, were engaged in the same pursuits, and encouraged him by precept and example. In the year 1753 he became acquainted, through the introduction of a common friend, with Arthur Murphy,* who, though not quite so old as Burke, was already writing a periodical paper called *The Gray's-Inn Journal*, which had been suggested by Dr. Johnson's *Rambler*. As the author of this paper, he had become intimate with many Templars; and Irish-

* Bisset, vol. i. p. 35.

men have a natural tendency to gravitate towards each other. Murphy found the young philosopher, whose society he had sought, and on whose brow Nature had already set the stamp of ability and genius, full of information. An acquaintance began, which however seems never to have grown into a very intimate friendship; in later years they do not appear to have met frequently; and though in relating in his old-age, to Dr. Bisset, the circumstances of his early introduction to Burke, Murphy was evidently desirous of making the most of what he knew, he did not mention a single fact of any importance about Burke's habits and studies in these days of which so little is known.* Murphy's memory, too, was in his old-age so treacherous, even when he recounted his own history, that he cannot be at all depended upon for that of any other person. We may indeed well believe that one of Burke's favourite haunts was the Grecian Coffee House, in Devereux-court, Strand, for it was especially honoured with the patronage of the Templars. If his finances permitted, he may also, as it has been stated, have attended Macklin's British Inquisition, though not so much for the sake of practice in public speaking as for obtaining a good dinner. The ordinary was on the most liberal scale, but debating was a mere burlesque. Foote's malicious merriment kept the company in a roar. "Well, Mr. Foote," said Macklin, thinking to rebuke him for his fun, just as the host one night was beginning to lecture, "do you know what I am going to say now?"

* That Murphy was never very intimate with Burke may easily be seen by any one who looks into his Translation of Tacitus, which was published in 1793, and inscribed with Burke's name. The Dedication is written throughout with the most respectful formality, and certainly never came from the pen of an old friend.

"No, Sir," replied Foote, "pray, do you?" As a novelty this might be endured, but it soon became tedious; and a few months after the British Inquisition had been established, the name of the ingenious proprietor appeared in the list of bankrupts as a coffee-house keeper and chapman. There could be little intellectual profit at this place of entertainment.

It was not in the Piazza of Covent Garden, but at an establishment in Essex-street, that young Burke could try the strength of that pinion on which he afterwards soared to such lofty heights. This was the celebrated Robin Hood Society, which met every Monday evening, and flourished under the auspices of a grave and respectable personage, who presided in a large gilt chair at the head of the table, whose majestic appearance inspired awe in the minds of all beholders, and whose stern expression checked all unseemly ebullitions. Fortune had played a strange freak with this eminent individual. He spoke with much senatorial ability; few men could encounter him in debate; he seemed born to rule in great assemblies; but he was a mere baker of bread. One who saw him some years later in his chair of state said that Nature had intended him for a Lord Chancellor. "Oh no!" said a friend who knew what the sonorous President's real business was, "only a Master of the Rolls." The image of this poor tradesman, to whom destiny had been so perverse, still asserting, though only from his gilt chair at the Robin Hood, his natural rank among the rulers of mankind, appears through the depths of time as a singularly pathetic spectacle.

But the baker had a longer tenure of office than most Lord Chancellors. He was already famous in 1751, when Members of Parliament and men of fashion, be-

sides aspiring Templars, went to study oratory under him; and for many years later his hammer might still be heard knocking upon the table, when it was necessary to command attention, and restrain any disposition to disorder. His school of oratory was certainly a better one than that of Macklin; but it was not a perfect school. Some of those who acquired their oratorical graces at the Robin Hood displeased Members of the House of Commons by a theatrical and declamatory manner, which seemed absurd and vulgar when compared with the nobler action and the genuine inspiration of Pitt. Burke's flowers of rhetoric could scarcely expand themselves in the limits to which every ambitious orator was confined at this Society. No speech, unless indeed it were that of the baker, who concluded the debate and summed up the arguments with all the gravity of the Bench, was allowed to occupy more than seven minutes in delivery.*

In preparing for the highest honours in oratory, the drama is an important auxiliary. Rumour, in this instance more than usually distinct, affirms that Burke was as constant an attendant in the pit of Drury Lane, as among the declaimers at the Robin Hood. The year after the beginning of their acquaintance, Murphy attempted the Stage as a profession, and thus a connection between Burke and the green-room may have been established. Through Murphy, or some other means, he was introduced to Garrick, and between them a friendship which only ended with their lives, was speedily formed.

To the lonely young author, whose days were spent in silence and solitude among his books, and his hours uncheered by the smiles of feminine society, it is not

* Walpole's George II., vol. i. p. 49.

wonderful that as the twilight darkened in his room, solitude should grow oppressive, and the fascinations of the theatre become irresistibly attractive. There he could still be a dreamer. There all that was imaginative and artistic in his soul, was stimulated, and the fair ideal of the world, which it is the nature of such men to yearn after, and which is not less, but more true than the dull materialistic reality of the prosaic and the practical, shone before him as in a celestial vision. The theatre, it is true, had its temptations like every other place in the world. If in his old-age Burke could write with so much fervour of Marie Antoinette, with what emotion must he, in his youth, have beheld his lovely country-woman, Margaret Woffington, who with so much beauty and so much goodness of heart, softened even the austerity of the rigid and severe? About his acquaintance with this lady there have been many shrugs of the shoulder, turns of the eye, and shakes of the head.

Within a year or two of the time of his birth, a French-woman, Madame Violante, had an exhibition in Dame-street of the same city. Her attention was attracted to a very graceful girl whom she observed with a pitcher on her head, daily carrying water from the Liffey, and whom she learnt on inquiry to be the daughter of a poor widow who kept a small grocer's shop and took in washing on Ormond Quay. Instructed by this kind patroness, the beautiful child played Polly, in the Beggars' Opera, achieved a signal success, and became the talk of the town. This was the first introduction to the Stage of the actress, who, as Margaret Woffington, became so widely celebrated in England and Ireland. She was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating women of her day. Tall in her form, and with the most graceful proportions,

eyes as black as jet, ever sparkling with animation, and over-arched by eyebrows at once soft, full, and delicate, a nose tending to the aquiline, rich hair, hanging in profusion round a finely moulded neck, full of life, full of humour, and full of intelligence, she was the envy of all women, and appeared formed by nature to win the hearts of all men. Though she occasionally played Lady Macbeth, there was nothing tragic in her style. It was into comedy that she threw all her exuberant spirits, her natural playfulness, and her untiring energy; and she delineated four different sets of comic characters which had nothing in common. She personified the fine lady of fashion, with a grace, tact, and dignity, which astonished those who knew her humble origin. She personified the vulgarity of a City dame, with a breadth and force of humour which drew laughter and tears from all eyes. She personified an old woman with all the garrulity, feebleness, and irritability of age; and, what was then thought extraordinary magnanimity on the stage, that she might represent senility more effectively, she did not hesitate to hide her lovely face under a hideous mask of paint, patches, and pencilled wrinkles. She personified a young rake, so as to make women fall in love with her, and deter Garrick from ever acting the part of Sir Harry Wildair, after she had by her ease and vivacity rendered it peculiarly her own. But she was not merely an actress: the woman, and not the artist, predominated in her life. While in the first element of all female virtue she was lamentably deficient, and could therefore neither be truly respected nor purely loved, so many romantic tales were told of her sympathetic benevolence, and munificent charity to the destitute who had no other benefactor, aid to the wretched who had no

other consoler, that even grave people could not but pity her in her degradation, and regret, that, exposed as she had been to contaminating influences from her early youth, with none to advise or direct her unguarded steps, the shadow of her vices should follow with equal pace the seductive lustre which her talents, beauty, accomplishments and impulsive generosity threw around her, and all who came into her presence.

The greatest falsehoods are generally based on a foundation of truth. As frequently, while Burke was living, his name was coupled with that of Margaret Woffington, it is not probable that the report of their acquaintance was a pure invention. It was natural that she who threw a spell over all who came near her, should have fascinated her young countryman, whose susceptibility and imagination were so remarkably powerful,—that he should have sought her society, and that his admiration of her should have become evident to his companions, who could only give an evil interpretation to what might be really quite innocent. During much the greater portion of the time which elapsed from Burke's first arrival in London, until he was married, Mrs. Woffington was not in London, and not even in England. She went in 1751 to Ireland, where she had accepted an engagement with Mr. Sheridan, to act for three years; and though her name will be found in the play-bills for the two London theatrical seasons which began in the respective autumns of 1754 and 1755, she did not permanently again reside in this country until 1756. Burke was then busy with his literary works; he soon afterwards was married to the lady whom he ever deeply loved. Can any person who knows anything of the human heart, suppose that a man of his chivalrous deli-

cacy and romantic purity, could stoop to an intrigue with an actress much older in years than himself, at the time when he was on the point of marrying a young lady of the highest virtue, and of more than womanly sweetness of disposition?

Margaret Woffington, too, was then no longer young. Consumption had marked her for its prey. A few brief months more, and her active feet were no longer to bound over the boards which had so long been the scene of her triumphs; the bloom on those cheeks was to become of a deeper red, and the brilliancy of her eyes to become of a more than earthly brightness; all those charms which had so captivated so many hearts, were the mere deceptive vesture of decay. With the tomb in prospect, the evil which had been her shame left her for ever, and she was to carry a contrite heart to the great Tribunal before which even the actress must at last appear.*

The more attentively many of the stories related of Burke at this time are examined, the more questionable does their authenticity become. Yet every intelligent person would gladly know something more about him as he is struggling alone in obscurity, without a profession, under the heavy burden of his father's displeasure, with little money in his pocket, and with very few friends.

He seems to have had the offer of some place in the Colonies, and have contemplated leaving England. He was evidently afraid of communicating the intention directly to his father, and sent a letter for him to his Uncle Garret, who informed him in what manner his proposal had been received. The whole family were greatly distressed. The old gentleman himself was almost frantic.

* Galt's Lives of the Players. Life of Margaret Woffington, 8vo, 1761.

Burke had awoke the furies which slumbered at the parental hearth, and they were ready to tear him to pieces.

On learning how grieved and angry his father was, he, in the March of 1755, made haste to write a most dutiful letter, deprecating his father's wrath. He had, he says, made no determined resolution : the affair indeed seemed to him to afford a reasonable prospect of success ; but he never thought of doing anything without asking the advice and approval of one who had trouble enough with his infirmities, without having any additional uneasiness. He would therefore follow his father's advice, not with reluctance, but with pleasure. He would be prepared to return, as soon as the end for which his return was desired, could be answered. The letter concludes with some very affectionate wishes for the health and happiness of both his mother and father ;* but as for returning to Ireland, we may, without any breach of charity conclude, that whatever he might say to quiet his family, it was not what the virtuous Edmund had the slightest intention of doing.

His path lies elsewhere. Such a letter could not soothe the irritated mind of the old attorney, and Burke, for the future, must be considered as a discarded son.

The world is wide ; at twenty-seven, the battle cannot be quite lost. Health, genius, and hope, follow him to his garret. That he endured much at this time, about which we know so little, there can be no doubt. But he endured it nobly, as all his future history and the few established facts of this period fully prove.

A most touching instance of his kindness to the houseless and the wretched, belongs to this hard season. It sheds a light over all that is obscure in this portion of

* Prior, p. 41.

his career, and shows to its very essence the spirit in which he lived and worked. Of all the facts relating to his private history, those which are now to be mentioned are the best authenticated, and the least known in all their characteristic details.

At the time when Burke was first enraptured with England, a poor Armenian, called Joseph Emin, was at Calcutta, sorrowing over the calamities of his native country, and, with all the ardour of youth and genius, meditating great designs. Before his family had been torn by Shah Abbas from their own soil, and planted at Hamadan, his fathers had been distinguished warriors ; and until the tyrant Kouli Khan had sharpened the battle-axe against his own army, they continued in Persia to be regarded as soldiers of good repute. But in that sanguinary devastation, two of Emin's uncles were slaughtered ; and his father, flying for life, was glad to take refuge at Calcutta, where he was joined by his son, then, with the precocity of the Asiatics, already a man in body and mind, though only in the eighteenth year of his age. A new prospect was displayed before the young Armenian's eyes. He beheld, for the first time, the effects of European civilization. The conquest of Hindostan was then but in its commencement ; Clive's efforts had not yet been crowned with success ; but as the poor Eastern exile looked at the English forts bristling with cannon, their soldiers manoeuvring with such marvellous precision, their ships covering the seas, and their skill in every art, science, and business which pertained to human life, he saw with the instinctive glance of genius that they were a people born for empire, that it would be easy for them to establish their dominion in the East, and that they would soon be the lords of India.

He formed a resolution as heroic as any ever blazoned in history, and what is more, he had the courage and ability to carry it out. He would visit Europe. He would learn the arts and sciences of the great Western world, and be the regenerator of his beloved Armenia. He would be the humble instrument of redeeming his countrymen from ignorance and slavery, that they might no longer be regarded as vagabonds on the face of the earth. He had been told that the Armenians of the mountains, unlike their brethren of the plains, were still brave and warlike, and that they only wanted a leader to discipline their energies, to regain their independence. He would be that leader. Once learned in all the knowledge of the Europeans, a master of their military science, and acquainted with all their wonderful inventions, he would present himself to his countrymen, and, with sword in hand, show them how to conquer their freedom for themselves.

He met, however, with difficulties at the outset. His father, another Mr. Richard Burke, would not hear of such an adventurous scheme, and peremptorily refused to aid him in going to England. "God," says Emin very finely, "had not given my father understanding of these things, but I could not bear to live like a beast, eating and drinking, without liberty or knowledge."* He threw himself at the feet of an English captain, and after many tears, and the most passionate supplications, at last obtained permission to work his passage to these shores. The rude sailors looked on the little brown Asiatic with contempt; and the daily hardships and insults he had to endure as a lascar were frightful. He was treated worse than a dog, yet he kept his great aim steadily in

* Autobiography.

view, and never lost hope or courage. The ship at last arrived at Wapping. And with the little money he received as wages he put himself to school. But this stock being soon exhausted, he became a servant and did menial offices, that he might be taught. His master unfortunately failed, and Emin was thrown destitute into the streets of the wide Metropolis. He tried to become a bricklayer, but was obliged to relinquish that laborious employment. He became a porter, but the work was too heavy for him, and he injured his back in attempting to carry weights above his strength. He then endeavoured to earn a little money as copying-clerk to an attorney; but unfortunately the histories of Charles XII. and Peter the Great happening to be in the office, Emin's mind soon became so full of them that he could never write a single page of law without interpolating some sentences from the lives of these two northern heroes.

The brave fellow had met with nothing but misery and misfortune. All resources were gone, when his father sent him, through an English gentleman, sixty pounds, on condition that the money should pay his voyage back to Calcutta. This was however the alternative from which Emin shrank with horror. He would rather endure anything than appear, as he afterwards wrote, among acquaintances, who, "like Banians, are entire strangers to humanity, standing ready to spit out their poison without remorse or consideration. They would say, 'He is come at last; a lascar he went, a booby he has returned.'"^{*} As he would not go back to India, he did not receive a farthing of his father's remittance.

One Sunday afternoon he wandered into St. James's

* Autobiography, p. 92.

Park. Two gentlemen were walking to and fro opposite Buckingham House, and to his great joy he recognized in one of them a lawyer whom he had seen in Calcutta. But bashfulness was one of Emin's most pleasing characteristics. On the same spot, a little while before, on venturing to accost the first mate of the vessel in which he worked his passage to England, he had received a sharp rebuke, and his delicate nature shrank from exposing itself again to such a rude shock as he had then experienced. He looked first at the lawyer and then at his companion. He was struck with the open, manly, and benevolent countenance of the "tall and noble-looking" gentleman who was conversing with the respectable individual to whom he wished so much to have the privilege of making a few inquiries about the parent he had left in sorrow and in anger. At last, after following them up and down for some time, he took off his hat, not to the lawyer, but to his tall young friend, and said, timidly, that he knew the other gentleman. The stranger at once returned the salutation, and asked what the name of the other gentleman was. "Mr. Bodly," replied the Armenian. "Why, then, since you knew him, did you not speak to him?" demanded the young man. The little Armenian saw that he had made a good impression, and looking earnestly up with his keen eyes, in which, though there was a cast, there was also much intelligence, to the face of his questioner, informed him of the manner in which the mate had received his recognition, and deterred him from taking the same liberty with Mr. Bodly. The stranger's sympathy was kindled by this simple tale. He immediately asked the lawyer about Emin's father, and inquired closely into his history.

Emin's heart opened, and he related minutely the singular circumstances of his life. Two officers were walking a little before them, and the new acquaintance interrupted Emin's narrative, with the remark, "These red-coats are the willing slaves of the nation." The poor Armenian, whose whole soul was full of military ardour, and who had just been detailing the scheme of military glory and national emancipation, imagined that this observation reflected upon himself, and suddenly became silent. The stranger kindly invited Emin to accompany Mr. Bodly and himself, and they all went into the Little Wilderness and partook of some milk and rusks. The evening was coming on before they left the Park. Mr. Bodly, the lawyer, went his way, without of course troubling himself about the destitute Asiatic. His companion, however, requested him to accompany him to his rooms; and they passed on down the Strand to the neighbourhood of Temple Bar. The considerate stranger's apartments were not in the most aristocratic of situations; they were up two pair of stairs, above a bookseller's shop, with the image of Pope's head sticking above the door.

As soon as they had entered, Emin's host proved how attentively he had watched him during their conversation in the Park, for he directly asked why he had stopped so suddenly in his narrative. "On account," said Emin, "of your reflection concerning the military gentlemen." "My good friend," replied the new acquaintance, "you did not understand my meaning; there is as vast a difference between you and them as between midday and midnight. They are enlisted into the service for a livelihood; you have left a fine country for improvement, that you may become considerable, and be of service to your countrymen." This comforted Emin, who continued his

extraordinary tale. The hours of the night were fast slipping away, the bells of the churches ringing for evening service had long become silent, and the hum of the great city was growing fainter upon the ears; but the two young men who from such distant lands had come together, still sat conversing together, and instinctively attracted closer and closer to each other. Emin at last desired to know the name of the gentleman who had taken so much interest in a poor and miserable foreigner. The stranger at once answered, "Sir, my name is Edmund Burke, at your service. I am a runaway son from my father, as you are!"*

Putting his hand into his pocket, Burke took out half a guinea, and said, as though he were ashamed to offer so small a sum, "Upon my honour this is all I have at present; please accept it." But he had to do with as noble a spirit as his own. The Armenian showed him in return three guineas and a half, which was all the money his hard labours had procured for him, and added, "I am worth this much; it will not be honest to accept of that; not because it is a small sum, if it were a thousand pounds I would not. I am not come away from my friends to get money; but if you will continue your kind notice of me, that is all I want; and I shall value it more than a Prince's treasure." Burke then put a volume of the Tatler into Emin's hands, to see how he could read; and after he had gone through two or three paragraphs, said, "Very well, I am your friend as much as it lies in my power." He wrote down Emin's address, and promised to call upon him the next day.

That morning, he made his appearance at the lodgings of his new acquaintance, gave him advice about what

* *Autobiography*, p. 90.

books he should read, and lent him many volumes from his own collection. The poor fellow begged permission to visit his kind friend regularly. "As often as you please," said Burke, "I shall be glad to see you." Edmund introduced him to William Burke, employed him in copying manuscripts, and paid him every possible attention. The fate of the Armenian was, on their first meeting, trembling in the balance; and the thought of the insults he might have to bear, should he return to his father, weighed heavily upon his heart. He afterwards declared, that had not Burke seen him every day, comforted him in his misery, and exhorted him to put his trust in God, he must have sunk down in despair. Better days were to follow; Emin was soon to meet with powerful patrons; and a course of prosperity was for a time before him, and with this prosperity, its usual accompaniment, a multitude of envious detractors. But he says with noble simplicity, "Both the Mr. Burkes were more glad of his success, than many enemies were sorry."*

Happening to meet with a countryman who had come to England about an Arabian horse for the Duke of Northumberland, Emin attracted the attention of this nobleman, who introduced him to the Duke of Cumberland. He was sent to Woolwich by the royal Duke's influence, and there learnt the rudiments of what he calls the "art military," which he was so desirous of understanding. On the breaking out of the war, he crossed over to the Continent, distinguished himself in eighteen skirmishes, and was always at the post of danger. He accompanied the expedition to St. Malo, and though he was on foot, had walked many miles, and was almost exhausted with

* Autobiography, p. 109.

fatigue, he was the first man who set fire to the French ships.*

If ever there was a hero in this world, Emin was one. All he wanted was the vulgar attribute of success. He went to Georgia, in the hope that Prince Heraclius would assist him in endeavouring to raise from their degradation the neighbouring Armenians. For years, he struggled against all hardships, and the miserable jealousy of the man to whom he had offered his services, and with whose sincere co-operation he could have accomplished great things. The whole history of Central Asia, and of European Turkey, might have been changed, had he met with fitting instruments to aid him in his noble labours. But, like many other patriots, he found his efforts frustrated by ignorance, jealousy, and selfishness. Finding at last that all was ineffectual, he, after repeated efforts, settled down in Calcutta; but his great qualities were enthusiastically acknowledged, even to the last, by all who were engaged in the Indian Administration. Emin's Autobiography, in which his early acquaintance with Burke is here recorded by himself, and which, curiously enough, though it was printed in the year 1792, not one person who has written of Burke's life seems yet to have seen, is a most interesting and curious production.† His career deserves to be most extensively known. As the first Asiatic who, before our Indian Empire was established, was sensible that the time of the English domination was approaching, his name ought not to be forgotten by the historian of British India.

* Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xxxvii. p. 3.

† The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin, an Armenian, written by himself. London: printed in the year 1792. It was revised by Sir William Jones. See Lord Teignmouth's Memoirs of Sir William Jones, vol. ii. pp. 59–63, edit. 1835.

His friendship with Burke only ended with their lives ; and it is very probable, that the intense interest which the Statesman always took in Eastern affairs, was first excited by his acquaintance with the brave and high-minded Armenian. Thirty-four years after the time of their first accidental meeting, we find Burke, when he was so deeply engaged in his great labours on the impeachment of Hastings, writing to Emin in these words : “ Who could have thought, the day I first saw you in St. James’s Park, this kingdom would rule the greater part of India ? But kingdoms rise and pass away. Emperors are captive, and blinded ; pedlars become emperors.” Who indeed thought, on that Sunday afternoon, of the great future of the Anglo-Saxon race in Asia ? Not one of those intriguing politicians who were then so busy tripping up each other, and scrambling for the spoils of the Treasury, which the death of Henry Pelham had laid open to all invaders. Neither Fox nor Newcastle would have condescended, on that day, to speak to Joseph Emin and Edmund Burke. Yet it is pleasanter to image in the mind’s eye, these two young men in the park that afternoon, than all the magnificence of the high official personages who thought but of their own sinister ambition.

CHAPTER V.

1756.

THE YOUNG PHILOSOPHER.

UNTIL Emin had written his Life, which vies in interest with the wildest romance, it could not have been supposed that he was actually the copyist of Burke's two early philosophical publications. The Armeniau says, that his friend was writing books at the time when their acquaintance began, and that he gave them to him to transcribe. Emin would certainly take more pleasure in copying such works, unintelligible as they might occasionally be to him, than in writing attorney's papers ; it may therefore be hoped that they were copied to his generous patron's satisfaction, and entirely free from any involuntary quotations from the histories of Charles XII. and Peter the Great. The first manuscript of which he had to make a clean copy, is called by him, "An Imitation of the late Lord Bolingbroke's Letter," being of course the celebrated Vindication of Natural Society, the ironical character of which the Asiatic seems to have understood, though the whole purport of it might be to him a mystery.

Could Burke, during the first months of his experience in England, have been able to look through some magical speculum, into the heart of one illustrious person,

who, by the mere antagonism of character and principles, was to produce a mighty effect on the young Irishman, he would indeed have seen a loathsome sight. Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, was drawing near the end of his long and tortuous career; and under no circumstances could it have been a pleasing spectacle to have examined microscopically the moral anatomy of this old statesman's heart. He was suffering from cancer, which now pervaded all his physical being; but the cancer of the nobler spiritual parts, the cancer of the intellect, the cancer of the soul, was more hideous than the external ravages of even this most terrible form of bodily disease. In his youth, he had been the wildest of libertines; in manhood, the most unscrupulous of politicians; and in age, the most reckless of freethinkers. There had thus been a dramatic, though most infamous consistency in his life, to the closing scene, which, when Burke first knew England, was drawing near. There was, under Bolingbroke's proud philosophical mask, the same gnawing ambition, the same love of the gewgaws of the earth, the same boundless vanity, the same boiling passions, which had agitated his frame when in early manhood he became Secretary of State. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity;" and this maxim, though Bolingbroke was ever preaching it, he certainly never practised. A strange contrast was presented between Burke in the fulness of youth, virtue, and energy, looking humbly and calmly to the future, and the old dying Deist who had so long declared himself sick and weary of the world, and yet was still hoping to be powerful when Prince Frederick should be King; who was as eager for that new world as Dodington himself; and who, after having written all his philosophical declamations,

was, in the last year of his life, intriguing to be made an Earl.*

Burke's good genius might have shown him, as a warning, this hoary iniquity of statesmanship and philosophy. Throughout Bolingbroke's life, he had grasped at everything, while fearing nothing, respecting nothing, admiring nothing, believing nothing. He was his own God. Nothing on earth nor in heaven was venerable to him but his own understanding, about whose omnipotence he was always declaiming and boasting. Yet in himself, had he but known himself, he might have seen what a poor vain thing this mere logical reason is; for this mighty philosopher, who thought himself fit to govern himself and everybody else, would become enraged at the most trivial domestic annoyance, fly into a furious passion, storm at the servants, and become fretful with all who came in his way. After having intrigued and schemed for so many years, and after having long looked with jaundiced eyes on the bright prospects of England, because he did not see his own image reflected in the tranquil waters of a nation's peaceful progress, he had written some books, which he hoped would immortalize his name as a philosopher; but he was still as vain, giddy, and confident, as any young politician who was but entering on his career.

And Bolingbroke died. The reading public was then all impatience for the publication of these Philosophical Works, of which he had himself spoken so highly, and which were to make an entire revolution in philosophy. He had bequeathed them as a most valuable legacy to a pert Scotchman of the name of Mallet, who, expecting to reap a golden harvest from their sale, rejected a mag-

* Walpole's Memoirs of George II.

nificent offer for the copyright. In the March of 1754, they were at length published in very handsome volumes ; and, as usual, a mountain had been labouring for some years with expectation, and in the end a very small philosophical mouse was produced.

Burke was one of those who looked for the appearance of these works with the most eagerness. He was one of those who were most grievously disappointed. Long afterwards, when he said that these writings had not left a permanent impression upon his mind,* he was scarcely conscious of the great negative effect which they most unquestionably had upon him, and which may be distinctively traced through his whole life. Many of his works, though directly applied to the politics of his day, were indirectly conclusive answers to Bolingbroke. It is evident, that while composing the Thoughts on the Present Discontents, and the Reflections on the French Revolution, he had the life and works of this vain and declamatory Deist constantly in view.

Two years after Bolingbroke's posthumous volumes had been given to the world, a curious little pamphlet appeared. It was entitled, A Vindication of Natural Society ; or, a View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every species of Civil Society ; in a Letter to Lord ——, by a late Noble Writer. The price of this remarkable production, with the title-page indicating such high parentage, was only one shilling and sixpence, and it contained one hundred and six pages. It was in Bolingbroke's style, full of his bold assumptions, and quite redolent of his mind. Now whatever the merits of Bolingbroke's philosophy might be, his style had been almost universally pronounced inimitable. This was the opinion of Lord

* Reflections on the French Revolution.

Chesterfield;* this was the opinion of Mr. Pitt;† and no person could surely have the hardihood to question the decision of the most accomplished man of fashion, and the most brilliant orator of the age. All who wished to study political eloquence in those days were referred to Bolingbroke's works. A page of the Craftsman was put into the hands of every ambitious youth, and he was told to read night and day the glowing composition of the statesman, who had eclipsed as a writer the gentle graces of Addison, and the masculine English of Swift.‡ Finding that the Vindication of Natural Society was being everywhere ascribed to the only man who was believed able to write in this flowing style, Mallet is said to have gone to Robert Dodsley's shop, in Pall Mall, and in the presence of many critics and authors, formally declared that this letter had not been written by Lord Bolingbroke.

Here then was a strange literary phenomenon. Here was a work in the inimitable style; and startling as its doctrines were, they were not more startling than many enunciated in the works which Mr. Mallet had really given to the world as the undoubted compositions of his patron. Could the inimitable style really have been successfully imitated? Could another Bolingbroke exist? On whom could the mantle of this profane political and philosophical prophet have descended? The little Armenian, and the tall young gentleman who rented two small apartments above the bookseller's shop, near the Temple, might have satisfactorily answered these questions. Most true it was that a greater than the wonderful Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, had actually appeared.

* Letters to his Son.

† Letters to Lord Camelford.

‡ Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

In the mere form of composition, the work of Bolingbroke, most directly imitated in the Vindication, is the Letters on the Study of History; though the method of reasoning employed against political society is of course, as it is stated in the Preface, which was some years afterwards added, when the tract was republished, the same as Bolingbroke used against all established religion. But only those who are thoroughly acquainted with both Bolingbroke and Burke can thoroughly enjoy this philosophical satire. To such it will appear full of mimicry and fun. To some persons, indeed, it has seemed only too perfect, and to be apparently as unanswerable in argument as it is eloquent in expression.

A wide survey of ancient and modern history is taken, and political society judged by its abuses. The history of mankind is found to be but a history of their wars. In Sesostris marching out of Egypt, rushing along the shores of the Mediterranean with seven hundred thousand men, and dyeing his whole course with blood, in Semiramis destroying two or three millions of men in her Indian war, in the frightful havoc attending the growth and fall of the Babylonian, Assyrian, Median, and Persian Monarchies, in the expedition of Xerxes, in the wars of Alexander, in the rivalries of the Greek Commonwealths, in the subjugation of the Roman provinces, in the wars of the Jews as they are recorded in the sacred writings, in the Barbarian invasions, in the conquest of America by the Spaniards, nothing is seen but one great truth, that society has caused all this devastation, and slaughtered seventy times the number of mankind then existing in the world. By following the simple dictates of Nature there could not have been all this bloodshed; a few bruises and scratches there might have been; but

only a few, a very few deaths. It is society which fosters the hatred of one people to another, that divides them into Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Italians, Turks, and Tartars. To excite pity we are obliged to sink these distinctions, and allude to the unfortunate as simply foreigners or men. A society by its very establishment infringed the rules of justice which it professed to maintain, and immediately provided itself with instruments of violence. On examining the simple forms of government, despotism, aristocracy, and democracy, they are found to be all tyrannies ; every artificial Government in its nature is shown to be an abuse ; and the favourite scheme of a mixed Government to be, if a comparison among such unmitigated evils were to be allowed, the worst of all. The effects of artificial law were as mischievous as those of artificial theology. The lawyer, in the temple of justice, neglected, in his veneration for mere form, the spirit of law, as the divine did the spirit of religion. Judging of society by its effects, who were the gainers ? The poor toiled night and day in abject wretchedness ; the laborious rich found nothing but misery ; and the idle rich suffered from imaginary terrors more than even the industrious and the poor. In a state of nature only could there be found any happiness. The evils of society are then recapitulated, and the portentous conclusion is at last brought out that society is more derogatory to God and more mischievous to man than even religion.

The last paragraph of this inimitable little piece of philosophical mimicry is really beautiful, even in the very irony which is fairly maintained to the end. "I am happy," Bolingbroke is made to say in conclusion, "that my estimate of things promises me comfort at my death!"

So eloquent and poetical are the sentences immediately preceding this final exclamation, that some writers have fallen in love with them, supposed that Burke was here speaking in his own person, and that these fine observations had all the melancholy truth of his philosophy.

A more mistaken critical notion was never penned. He was very far from thinking that life was a mere drama, of which the nearer we approached the end the more we became disgusted with the former scenes; or that the cool light of reason showed us at the close of our career how delusive were all the false splendours of our more sanguine seasons.

All this was directly contrary to his philosophy. To him, life at all its successive epochs was not a fiction, but a truth. He followed no delusions, and had therefore no dismal awakenings. His last writings are an echo of the earnest meaning in this pleasant parody; and however it may be regarded by the mere party politician, this Vindication is enough to demonstrate his consistency to the philosopher. To us, who can look back with the light of experience on this little tract, every sentence of it reveals a deep and awful meaning, such as neither the reader nor author, in 1756, could fathom. It is now not merely a playful imitation of Bolingbroke, but a solemn prophecy in the form of a light satire.

The other work which the Armenian transcribed for his young friend and patron was of a very different nature. The two productions must however be considered together, that a just idea of Burke's character and mental accomplishments may be formed at the time when he was launching out on the troubled waters of Literature, and hopefully spreading his sails to the morning breeze. The Vindication of Natural Society is full of warmth and

energy; it shows that the eloquence of its author was not altogether like that of Lord Bacon, the tardy development of his maturer years; but that it was a spirit ever accompanying him from youth to age, and always obedient to his call. The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful is written in a style comparatively cold and unimpassioned. But whether the method of composition applied to this great metaphysical topic was judiciously chosen, or not, there can be little doubt that it was deliberately adopted and sternly adhered to as that which, in Burke's opinion, was most adapted for doing justice to the subject of the book.

It was published a few months after the former work, and excited considerable attention. A second edition was called for, to which Burke prefixed a brief Discourse on Taste, and an admirable Preface. He also expanded several of those portions which had been most strongly attacked, and the work was increased both in bulk and in value.

It is not surprising that it should have been received with such favour on its first publication, nor that it should have retained its popularity throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. The tone of it was the fashionable one at the time when it appeared. It was taken for granted that the age of mystery had vanished from the earth, that all psychological phenomena could be explained by the individual reason, and that the more mechanical a theory was the more likely it was to account for the noblest emotions of our nature. Believers and sceptics were, after all, infected by the same fashionable doctrines. To Hume this book was a pretty treatise; to Johnson it was a model of philosophical criticism. They

never supposed that the day would come when it would be read with wonder and astonishment, and the theory regarded as monstrous and absurd.

This theory, whatever may be its defects, has certainly one merit: it is surprisingly simple. The passions are ranged into two classes, those relating to pain and danger, and of which self-preservation is the immediate object, and those which may be called the social passions, and have their origin in pleasure. The peculiar selfish passions arising from fear, Burke considers belonging peculiarly to the sublime; and that those of society based on pleasure have created the feeling of love, and are the cause of the beautiful. Confiding in the originality of his theory, the author proceeds to trace the different objects which inspire the sublime and beautiful; and thus are all the affections of mankind industriously mapped out. He hesitates at nothing. The effect produced on the mind by the contemplation of the grandest natural scenery, the noblest piles of architecture, the loftiest creations of the poet, the reverential awe which is felt in meditating piously on the attributes of the Almighty, are all boldly deduced from fear: that is, the most exalted sentiments of which human nature is capable are supposed to originate in the lowest of all motives. The reader at length, to his astonishment, is told, after attempting to follow the reasoning so far, that even smells and stenches, if they only be sufficiently disgusting, may be the cause of a sublime sensation.*

In the third book, which is devoted to beauty, Burke at first proceeds in an admirably philosophical spirit. He clearly shows that proportion cannot be the cause of beauty, because no certain rules can be drawn either

* Part II. section 21.

from all the objects which inspire us with beauty, or from particular classes of them ; that, contrary to Hume, fitness or utility can be no direct cause of beauty, since there are many beautiful things which are not useful, and many useful things which never could be associated with the idea of beauty. He triumphantly demonstrates what cannot be the cause of this perception ; but the fatal spell is upon him when he attempts to prove what that cause really is. Beauty, he says, must consist of some positive qualities ; and he concludes that it is a quality in bodies acting mechanically through the senses upon the mind.*

With rule and compass he then sets forth to determine what beautiful things must be. They must be small ; they must be smooth ; they must have a gradual variation ; they must be delicate ; their colours must be clear, and soft, and weak. The sublime and beautiful thus appear contrasted with each other. They are found to be ideas of such very different natures, that though in the infinite variety of natural combinations, they may be sometimes found united, yet between them there is ever maintained, from their natural causes, an eternal distinction.†

The absurdity of the whole thing is most obvious, however, in the fourth book, where the author endeavours to reconcile a purely metaphysical subject, with the principles of the physiologist. It is strange that the contradictions and perplexities into which he was driven in his efforts to explain the natural cause of love, why darkness was terrible, why smoothness was beautiful and why sweetness was relaxing, did not make him suspect that his whole theory was one gross error ; and that by beginning at the wrong end in such researches, by attri-

* Part III. section 12.

† Part III. section 27.

buting moral sentiments to mere physical causes, the more clearly he reasoned upon his premises, the falser and the more ridiculous was the conclusion he was bringing out. But when was a philosopher of seven-and-twenty ever induced to give up any theory which he had ingeniously formed, because its consequences were manifestly absurd? Why then should not beauty act, as this young metaphysician in this Essay assured the world it did, "by relaxing the solids of the whole system"?* A conclusion not very flattering to great poets, who pride themselves on their fine imagination, and their high appreciation of the beautiful.

Apart from its theory this Inquiry is a very meritorious work, and, considering the youth of its author, deserving of the highest praise. Many of the observations are keen, and many of the illustrations most ingenious. So far as the treatise is experimental, and independent of its principal dogma, it would have done honour to any thinker of that age. In some respects it is truly Baconian. It exhibits the result of much close investigation and much attentive consideration of mental operations.

On carefully perusing it, a vivid image of Burke in his youthful days rises before the eye of the mind. If he had not acquired law, he had acquired knowledge. If he had not mastered all the proceedings in Chancery practice, he had learnt much of men and things. The great book of the world had been spread out before him; and he had earnestly devoured its sublime page. While he was labouring alone, and looking trustingly to his future, while he was assisting the humble Armenian in his distress and bidding him be of good cheer, while he was ridiculing the sophistry of Bolingbroke, and patiently investigating

* Part IV. section 19.

the hidden causes of things, and while in an age of mechanism, and himself forming mechanical theories, he could yet keep his faith in Providence, and a true Christian humility pervading his life, he was acting the beautiful, though the cause of it was concealed from him as it is from us all.

CHAPTER VI.

1756-1758.

WRITING FOR BOOKSELLERS.

BUT philosophical inquiries may not have been the only subject occupying Burke's mind at this time. Through the darkness in which his early life is enveloped we catch some faint glimpses of other occupations. It has even been said that during the first years he spent in England his mind oscillated between the Catholic and Protestant faith ; and that his doubts and perplexities on religious matters were to his father a cause of great uneasiness. Lord Charlemont, who became early acquainted with Burke, alludes to some youthful indiscretions connected with the Catholic religion ;* and another report, not indeed entitled to the same weight as Lord Charlemont's casual remark, but founded on the testimony of a clerk in the office of Burke's father, has been circulated, to the effect that the son, shortly after he went from Ireland to the Temple, married a Catholic lady, and was himself for some time on the point of embracing that religion. But one portion of this statement may be conclusively shown to be incorrect ; and when so material a part of any evidence is disproved, the remainder cannot be received without suspicion. From Emin's narrative, it is plain that Burke was not married when their acquaintance

* Hardy, Life of Lord Charlemont, vol. ii. p. 282.

first commenced, and when he was preparing for the press his two first works. It is not unlikely, indeed, that he had known Dr. Nugent for some years before he entered into family relationship with him ; that his frequent journeys to Bath and Bristol had other inducements besides those of health and relaxation ; that he may have been engaged to Miss Nugent before the publication of his Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful ; and that, knowing Dr. Nugent to be a Roman Catholic, the prospect of such a union may have alarmed the Protestant susceptibility of Mr. Burke in Dublin.*

Burke's early marriage would not remove his father's anxiety. The time as well as the place of the marriage have indeed been a subject of controversy. But as Burke was not married when Emin was transcribing for him the two works he had just published, and as he writes of himself as married, and residing at Battersea, on the 10th of August, 1757, there can be little doubt that this important event actually took place in the winter of 1756, or early in the following year. The common report is, that his health having sunk after so much appli-

* There seems not the slightest reason for crediting the statement in Galt's Early Life and Studies of Benjamin West, that the painter met at Dr. Markham's a monk, whose likeness to Burke was striking, and who on inquiry turned out to be his brother.¹ We have the story at second-hand, and it is altogether unsupported either by evidence or likelihood. In 1766, two years only after Mr. West's encounter with the Prior, in the letter on family matters from Burke's mother when he and Richard were in Ireland, no other brother is mentioned. Mrs. Leadbeater, writing of the brothers when they were sent to Ballitore, mentions but three. Nowhere but in Mr. Galt's book does a fourth appear. Had Burke really had a brother in the Roman Catholic Church, he would have been one of the last persons to have concealed the fact. And why should he have concealed it? No secret was ever made of the adherence of his sister to the old religion.

¹ Vol. ii. p. 7.

cation to the Philosophical Inquiry, he went immediately after its publication down to Bath, where his countryman, Dr. Nugent, practised as a physician, and that the doctor took his patient into his own house, when he fell in love with, and shortly afterwards married, Miss Nugent, who kindly attended him during his indisposition. After having unsuccessfully, with others, endeavoured to find any register of such marriage in either Bath or Bristol, and weighing the circumstances as they appear on the surface, I cannot but think that it is probable Dr. Nugent removed from Bath before the marriage; and that it was from Burke's apartments over the bookseller's shop near the Temple, he was taken by the kind physician to his residence in London. The noise in Fleet Street and the Strand would certainly be injurious to the unstrung nerves of a literary invalid; and such an incident would be much more appropriate as occurring in London than in Bath.*

It was generally believed that Mrs. Burke was, like her father, a Roman Catholic. This has been positively denied by relatives and others, who have stated that she had been brought up as a Presbyterian by her mother. Yet Richard Shackleton, from whom Burke concealed nothing, and with whom he conversed unreservedly on religious matters, ought to have known the truth. He

* As Dr. Bisset wrote very shortly after Burke's death, and when persons who must have known the circumstance were still living, his testimony is not unimportant. He says, "Burke's health was gradually impaired by this intense application, and an alarming illness ensued. He resorted for medical advice to Dr. Nugent, a physician of great talents and skill, and of no less benevolence. *The doctor considering that the noise, and various disturbances incidental to chambers, must impede the recovery of his patient, kindly offered him apartments in his own house*" (vol. i. p. 41). Bisset's work is far from being the worst that has been written on Burke.

distinctly states that Mrs. Burke was of the Church of Rome before her marriage.* Between such conflicting assertions it is not easy to decide. But whatever obscurity there may be hanging over this and other questions relating to Burke's early history, all letters and all anecdotes, all conjectures and all facts, agree in showing that the young lady, who in the twenty-third year of her age exchanged the name of Miss Nugent for that of Mrs. Edmund Burke, made one of the best of wives with which a man of genius was ever blessed.

She was not indeed what is called a regular beauty. But she was ever sweet and gentle in her disposition, and inexpressibly winning and graceful in her manners. Quiet, thoughtful, retiring, firm and decided in her principles, calm and considerate in all her actions, she knew the world, yet was not corrupted by it ; and though good-natured to everybody, her happiness was centred in her husband. The beautiful character which Burke drew of her on the thirteenth anniversary of their marriage reads like that of an ideal ; but stern men of the world, like Mr. Hardy and Sir Philip Francis, spoke of her as all that was beautiful and amiable among women ; and so shrewd a critic of her own sex as Miss Burney, and so good and severe a woman as Hannah More, have cordially given a similar testimony. A wife who could make such men and such women enthusiastically praise her virtue and her amiableness must have been virtuous and amiable indeed. She glides with Quaker calmness, and an almost saint-like beauty, through the agitating scenes of Burke's daily life, ever soothing his natural irritability by her natural gentleness, standing by his side in moments of despondency, cheering him in poverty, nursing him

* Letter in London Evening Post, April 14th to 17th, 1770.

in sickness, consoling him in sorrow. Proud to live in the shadow of him whom she so devotedly loved, she confined herself almost exclusively to the home which for him she was so anxious to make happy ; and so unpretending indeed was she, that few of Burke's friends, except those who habitually visited at his house, had the slightest acquaintance with his wife, or even seemed to be aware of her existence. In that great lottery where domestic happiness is staked, Burke was thoroughly successful. Whatever may be his future troubles, it is much to remember that at his fireside there is and will be peace.*

Life began with him in earnest. He had, in the language of Bacon, given hostages to fortune. His pecuniary resources, too, were very limited ; as any one may easily believe, when the hundred pounds which his father sent him in exchange for the present of the second edition of the *Inquiry* was the occasion of a special letter of thanks.† It seems probable that this hundred pounds was all the assistance Burke received from his father in the first year of his married life. Dr. Nugent evidently lent the two young people a helping hand ; and the kindness of his father-in-law, with his own severe literary exertions, rather than any regular allowance from Dublin, were Burke's only means of support. The remittance from his father was, after all, only a transient fit of kindness ; for however little knowledge we may have on other points, the evidence of Edmund being on bad terms with him, not only at this time but for years afterwards, and to within a few months of the time of his

* Letter of Francis to Burke, in Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 131. Hardy, p. 287, vol. ii.

† Letter to Mr. Agmondisham.—Vesey, Sept. 10, 1760. New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 382.

death, is unequivocal. It was in fact the normal state of things, and the periods of reconciliations and remittances altogether occasional and exceptional. Burke's reputation was growing rapidly in London before his father could believe in him at all; and the old attorney went down to his grave doubtful of the future greatness of his son, grumbling at his visionary schemes, and at his unwillingness to follow any regular profession.*

But with a wife, and the prospect of a family depending upon his exertions, and with his respectable parent dissatisfied with his conduct, Burke had powerful motives for industry. There is evidence enough that he plied his pen steadily and well. An Account of the European Settlements in America rapidly followed the Essay from the press. The original assignment of the copyright to Dodsley, the publisher, is still in existence. It is in Burke's handwriting, and bears the date of January 5th, 1757.† The work made its appearance in two volumes a few months after the copyright had been disposed of; and a second edition, with improvements, was published in the following year. From not having been included in the authorized impression of his writings it has been doubted by some whether it were really his composition. Others have imagined that he must have been assisted in preparing it by Richard or William Burke. That however he was the principal, if not sole, author of the Account is very clear.

Much of the book is an elegant compilation, derived from the edition of Harris's *Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca*, published in 1744 and 1748. Burke

* Burke's letters to his friends in Ireland, *passim*.

† This interesting document was in the collection of the late Mr. Wilkes, and has been recently sold.

has however imbued the whole subject with his spirit; and it is a compendium at once lively, philosophical, and eloquent. It is divided into six parts, the first containing a brief narrative of the discovery of America; the second giving a description of the manners and customs of the original inhabitants; the third relating to the Spanish Settlements; the fourth to the Portuguese; the fifth to the French, Dutch, and Spanish; the sixth, and most valuable part, to the English Colonies. The work is written in the first person, and has some remarkable specimens of that peculiarly didactic style which Burke loved best, and most frequently used. He had already become a political economist, and tells his reader that it is in a commercial light that the Colonies are most worthy of being considered. He therefore gives the fullest scope to this part of his subject, and says at the outset, "My principal view in treating of the several Settlements was to draw everything towards their trade, which is the point that concerns us the most materially."

The Seven Years' War had begun, and the attention of Englishmen was fixed on America as the most appropriate battle-field between France and England. There at least we were not fighting for Hanover; there at least we had no occasion to subsidize foreign Powers; the means and the object of the contest in that part of the world were purely English. The colonies speedily rose into importance. Until that time they had never, since the departure of the last generation of Elizabethan heroes, much occupied the mind either of statesmen, philosophers, or of the multitude. The stern Puritan had indeed looked to the wilderness for his freedom; but it was not because he loved the new world, but because he

hated the religious establishments of the old. He became intolerant in his turn. The author justly observes that, while in England the Puritans could not bear being chastised with rods, in some of the Colonies they scourged their fellow-colonists with scorpions.*

The American plantations were no longer a mere place of refuge. Although there was little that was enlightened in the views of the English people with regard to the North American Colonies, they began at length to regard them as part of their Empire ; and the rivalry of France on the great lakes, and for the valley of the Ohio, increased their desire to maintain and extend these acquisitions. It was to teach his countrymen the value of the objects for which they were contending, and to diffuse more generous notions about the Colonies in general, that Burke compiled his two little volumes ; and it is no slight praise to a work written on this subject at such an early age, and when the ablest statesmen thought so little upon colonial questions, that the opinions expressed in it on commerce, government, and population, are all sound, liberal, and in accordance with those he afterwards developed in Parliament, and which his two great American orations have so powerfully impressed on the history and literature of England.

No English edition of his works yet contains this Account. It has, however, found a place in the fine American edition, which to our shame must be admitted to be in some respects superior to any English impression of Burke's works. He afterwards welcomed Dr. Robertson's History of America, and probably thought that after such an elaborate and classic publication, the merits of which he so very highly estimated, his humbler attempt,

* Account of the European Settlements in America, vol. ii. p. 151.

written to serve an immediate purpose, might be consigned to oblivion. But he thought more meanly of it than it deserves.*

He gave himself no rest from his labours. The Account was published in April, 1757, and before that year terminated he had sent the first portion of another work to the press. This was the unfinished Essay towards an Abridgment of English History, which was published, in the quarto edition of his writings, some years after his death. The original sheets, extending to seventy pages, may still be seen in the British Museum : they were found by Mr. Nicol, the successor of Dodsley, and given by him to Dr. Burney. The copy from which the fragment was printed by Burke's executors was found to be much more complete ; as, instead of breaking off in the year 388 of the Christian era, it continues the work to 1216, and concludes with the first pages of an Essay towards an Abridgment of the Laws of England, which is most interesting, as showing the comprehensive design of the work, and the masterly spirit in which it would have been executed. No person who has perused the fragment to its abrupt termination, at the commencement of the chapter on the English laws, will not deplore the circumstances, whatever they were, which thus put a period to this Abridgment, just at the time when Burke's genius, grappling with that most difficult of subjects, was displaying itself in all its originality and force.

Though scarcely a history, this work is excellent as a

* That Burke was not afterwards inclined to acknowledge the book, is clear from a passage in one of the amusing letters of Boswell, which have been published as these volumes are passing through the press. Burke stated, that he had only revised the Account ; but every one who has read it will agree with Boswell, that much, if not all of it, is indisputably his composition.

disquisition. Written in 1757, it has none of that illiberal liberality which was then so much in fashion. The services of the Catholic Church, and even of the monastic system, to the cause of civilization in the dark ages, are fully admitted. There is no sneering at the monks, no bewailing the superstitions and prejudices of the people, no raptures at the lights of the eighteenth century. Hume dismisses the Druids in a single paragraph, as scarcely worth the attention of a philosopher; the sketch of that order is one of the most interesting and instructive in this Abridgment. Nor is the sagacious manner in which Burke treats of the invasion of Britain, the migration of early nations, the policy of the Roman Emperors, the Saxon customs, and the Feudal system, less worthy of his pen. Making no pretensions to merely antiquarian knowledge, his mind seems ever generalizing from the data which the imperfect records of remote ages supply. Laws, manners, customs, traditions, defaced inscriptions, broken monuments, ruined piles of architecture, are to him not mere apologies for displaying his intellectual subtlety, but landmarks on the wide sea of the past, which, on being rightly understood, conduct the diligent investigator to the deep truths involved in the history of mankind.

He had already acquired that high admiration for Montesquieu which he retained to the last moments of his life. The amiable and accomplished President is styled by him the greatest genius that has enlightened this age; and thirty-four years afterwards, the picture of the same ingenious Frenchman in the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, is one of the most eloquent and characteristic pieces of Burke's composition. The Spirit of Laws was then highly popular in England. On no

mind had it a greater influence than on that of Burke. Two years before the Abridgment on English History was begun, Montesquieu had expired in Paris, amid the tears and regrets of all who had ever known him; and he might have been comforted for the vexation which the attack on his great work had caused to a being of his delicate sensibility, had he known that he had contributed to inspire a young Irishman, at that time living up two pair of stairs near Temple Bar, with a still deeper and more eloquent spirit of political philosophy than was exhibited even in the *Spirit of Laws*.

It has been conjectured that Burke discontinued his historical work because Hume was engaged on the same labour. But so different were the opinions of these two writers on many historical questions, and in such a different manner were their two histories composed, that the fact of Hume being engaged on the same subject would rather have been an inducement to Burke to prosecute his researches, and to proceed diligently in the composition of his Abridgment, than a motive for abruptly relinquishing what he had so far industriously and successfully executed. He is also known to have declared the earlier portion of Hume's work to be extremely superficial; and Hume is said to have acknowledged to him that he had merely dipped into, and never diligently studied, the original authorities. The want of another work, giving the opposite side of many of the questions on which Hume had written with so much prejudice, and so little anxiety to arrive at the truth, was so painfully felt, that even Dr. Robertson, after Hume's work was published, thought of going over the same field.

There were other subjects about which Burke was in

similar antagonism to Hume. He meditated a refutation of that ideal theory (which however becomes in its consequences so very material) that Berkeley first, and Hume afterwards, with greater boldness and with a different object, adopted and enforced. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that Burke ever wrote a page of the refutation he certainly contemplated. No such attempt appears in his writings, or is mentioned in his Correspondence. On this question Boswell is the best and indeed only good authority. He says, that though Burke did once intend writing such a work, it never was executed ; and he ascribes, for the task not having been undertaken, the cause which there can be little doubt to be the true one, both with regard to that work and to the discontinuance of the Essay on English History : Burke became engrossed with political affairs, and had then no leisure for either metaphysics or history.* The intention was frequently talked about in the literary meetings where Burke displayed his richness of conversation, and Johnson his sententious dogmatism, and mere literary men regretted that the powers of the mind which could have refuted Hume were only exerted in resisting the imprudent measures of the Court. The project went no further. It was not as a metaphysician, but as a political philosopher both in speculation and in action, that Providence intended the author of the Reflections to vindicate His ways to a maddened and disorganized world.

* Boswell's Life of Johnson.

CHAPTER VII.

1758-1759.

THE CHRONICLER OF VICTORY.

EVENTS were then in progress calculated to withdraw a mind so impulsive, sympathetic, and comprehensive, away from the study of the old Anglo-Norman Chronicles to the observation of the exciting present. The glorious war administration of the great Commoner had begun its triumphant career; and at his beck the national spirit had come forth vigorous and defiant. Against mighty odds the English people prepared to carry on the contest with France and Austria, not doubting of complete victory. With the King of Prussia for their only ally in Europe, they resolved to conquer both in Germany and America.

For years they had despaired. The incompetence of their rulers had been such that they really seemed for a time ready to abdicate with sullen resignation their high position in the world, and to believe in their degeneracy from the commanding qualities of their ancestors. How could a nation, ruled by a Duke of Newcastle and his parasites, imagine that it could conquer the world? At the outset of the war, the loss of Minorca, and the abject terror shown at the mere prospect of invasion, proved how much the nation had been dejected by the want of spirit evinced by the Ministers.

Great literary talent had set itself to find reasons for this growing effeminacy. Dr. Brown published the first volume of his Estimate of the Manners and Customs of the Times; and each Englishman, after reading the homily against all fashionable vices and follies, looked at his neighbour and acknowledged that he saw his own cowardice and degeneracy reflected. This extraordinary book produced a great sensation, and may even now be read with curiosity, as illustrating the spirit of that period. Burke alluded to the effect it had in his youth, some forty years afterwards in the Letters on a Regicide Peace. The second volume, answering the criticisms of the first, and continuing the subject in the same strain, appeared in 1758, at the time when the people, under Mr. Pitt's auspices, were beginning to recover from their epidemiical jaundice, and aspiring to be a nation of heroes. As the people had now fully recovered their national spirit, the continuation was not so successful as the first performance.*

Englishmen awoke and found that a nightmare had oppressed them. In 1756 all was despair; in 1758 all was confidence. The sacrament of blood which both mob and Ministers had taken for their despondency and imbecility after the loss of Minorca, had contributed to revive the drooping spirit of England; and a patriotic and fierce energy was kindled in the breasts of all who had partaken of that terrible communion. A great high-priest, who knew not what it was to fear or to despair of his country, stood at her altar, and every admiral and

* Walpole's Letters, vol. iii. p. 352. For an account of Brown see Biographia Britannica; Correspondence between Warburton and Hurd, *passim*; Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 213; Gentleman's Magazine, vol. l. p. 34.

general, inspired by the example, felt himself partake in the same unbending resolution.

The expeditions to the coast of France, however expensive and inefficient, contributed greatly to restore public confidence. They were carrying the war into the country of our enemies ; instead of supinely waiting for an invasion, we became the invaders. Supplies were never more readily granted, abuses never more rapidly corrected, advantages of the weakness of our foes never more speedily taken. England had no choice but to support the King of Prussia ; and therefore, without indulging in sophistical refinements on European policy, she manfully supported him, and cheerfully paid subsidy after subsidy. The attack on Rochfort might be unsuccessful, the convention of Closter Seven dishonourable, the expedition to St. Malo of little moment, and even the capture of Cherbourg not very glorious ; blood might be copiously shed, and money prodigally spent ; but the people, obeying the impulse of their great minister, persevered. They persevered and at length reaped the fruits of their stubborn fortitude. Conquest followed conquest ; triumph succeeded triumph ; mighty acquisitions were made in India, which no man until these were accomplished considered possible, and of which the ardent mind of Pitt had not dreamed. The year 1758 closed in expectation, and all people looked proudly forward for another season of victory. It was felt that the fall of Louisbourg, and the acquisition of the whole island of Cape Breton, were but an earnest of the many conquests about to follow.

As Burke contemplated this splendid scene, the idea occurred to him of becoming himself the chronicler of these interesting events. No person had paid more at-

tention to the great theatre on which so many noble qualities were being displayed ; and he at length submitted to Dodsley the plan of a periodical work which should embrace a view of the history, politics, and literature of each year. This publisher approved of the ingenious suggestion, and the Annual Register, which has been in a certain manner continued up to the present time, was the result.

For some years Burke was evidently sole chronicler, and he admirably performed his yearly task. The first volume was published in 1759. It contained a complete history of the War from its commencement to the end of 1758. The historical portion of the volume was compiled with consummate skill and industry ; nor as a history of the Seven Years' War, with all the disadvantages under which it appeared at a time when there was no such thing in existence as a daily newspaper, as we now, familiar with the prodigious labour capital and literary power expended on *The Times*, consider a daily newspaper ought to be, can it be said that this contribution to contemporary historical literature, has ever yet been superseded.*

But there were other sections of the Annual Register inferior indeed to be history, but still most useful. There was an English chronicle containing curious information, much of which may still be read with interest. There was a careful selection of State papers, to fortify the statements in the narrative. There was a collection of charac-

* In a complete edition of Burke's Works, whenever such an addition to English literature and political history shall be made, it may be hoped that his History of the War will find an appropriate place. It was afterwards republished in a separate form, entitled *A Compleat History of the Late War, or Annual Register of its Rise, Progress, and Events, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.* London, 1763.

ters from all quarters, illustrating literary and political history. There was a section for extraordinary adventures, one for miscellaneous essays, another for poetry ; and an account of the most remarkable publications of the year.

These books are well chosen. They are nearly all such as the judgment of time has declared to be the most interesting of their day. First in order stands Dr. Brown's Estimate, with some excellent original observations by Burke on the Decline and Fall of Empires ; one passage of which must remind every reader of an eloquent paragraph to the same purport at the beginning of the first letter on a Regicide Peace. There is a favourable notice of Dr. Leland's History of Philip, King of Macedon ; with some complimentary observations, which it doubtless as much pleased Burke to pay an old friend and countryman, as they were gratifying to the learned author, who saw the merits of his two quarto volumes acknowledged on this side of the Channel. Jortin's Life of Erasmus, and a memoir of Sir Thomas More, come next in review ; when the critic shows that he could discriminate as well as praise, and that though always good-natured he would also be just. The last and longest article is on the work which of all the publications of 1758 perhaps best deserved an interesting notice, Horace Walpole's Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors. The merits and defects of this book, and of its witty and keen-sighted author, are at once correctly stated when it is remarked that few writers had such a happy secret of making dry matter read so agreeably, and it is gently regretted that he was so prone to indulge in points and turns.

Compared with any contemporary publication, the first

Annual Register does great credit to the Author. For breadth of design and power of execution it is infinitely superior to any periodical that had yet been published in England. The candour of its tone is almost unexampled. In the whole volume, as indeed throughout the whole series which Burke superintended, there is not one harsh review of any book, not one ungenerous observation upon any rival politician. Greater praise than this cannot be given ; and the more the Annual Register is examined the more will its justice be admitted. As Burke wrote this yearly History, he seems simply to have looked upon it as a means of subduing party rancour, of correcting false impressions, of collecting materials for the future historian, and of doing good wherever good could be done. He lived to see the volumes he had himself edited go through many editions ; and they have been more than once reprinted after his death. On some of the title-pages, may still be read the undeniable evidence of eighth, ninth, and tenth impressions. They have been a rich mine to all writers on the times of which they treat. Their authority on many points is considered unquestionable. But they have seldom been studied with much reference to Burke himself, although they abound with his opinions on passing topics and books. Many of these paragraphs, written on the spur of the moment, are highly interesting, and are always expressed in such a manner as never by any one acquainted with his style and method of judging, to be mistaken for the composition of any other mind. A judicious collection from these Annual Registers would indeed be an important addition to his works, and would not be inferior in interest and value to his acknowledged writings. Some of the pearls and diamonds which, with unexampled profusion, he scattered in familiar conversa-

tion, and in the unreported debates of the House of Commons, may still be seen shining brightly through the dust of these Annual Registers ; and perhaps some kind and affectionate hand may yet seek them out, and restore them to their proper place among the rich treasures bequeathed by departed genius.

The success of the Annual Register is as evident as that the author did not reap the pecuniary advantages attending it. His father-in-law now lived with him ; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he and his wife now lived with his father-in-law. It has been said, and is very probable, that the amiable physician bore the principal share of the expenses of the household at this time ; and for awhile it is not unlikely that the only certain addition Burke could make to this income was the hundred pounds he received yearly for each Annual Register. This was but poor payment for a work which had at once become popular. It would seem however that his spirits were as good as ever ; that in spite of adverse circumstances he looked confidently to the future ; and that if he did not command success he certainly deserved it.

Amid those London occupations, he did not forget his kind friends on the Blackwater, and especially his uncle, Garret Nagle, for whom he ever entertained such an affectionate veneration. Two letters which, though they do not appear in his collected correspondence, are as valuable as any portion of that series, give us a most delightful glimpse of his relations at this time with his kinsmen. They are addressed to his uncle, and show what happiness an account of his old friends had given himself and his little circle. He assures his uncle that there are very few persons in the world whom he so much respected, or

whose good opinion he so much valued. He had been eleven years away from the County of Cork, but his remembrance of all his friends there was as fresh as if he had but left them yesterday. He hopes they will write to him often, and not wait until they can get franks for their letters, as he would ill-deserve to have such friends if he valued the trifling expense of postage. In return he promises to send them regularly the best of the London newspapers, and would only wait until he could himself collect a stock of franks in order to transmit them without interruption.

We also see other members of Burke's family. His brother Richard is at one time away from them, attending to his mercantile engagements in the City; and a few months later, in the October of 1759, he is going off with a valuable cargo to the West Indies: one of the first merchants of the City having taken him by the hand. Little Richard, who was born early in the previous year, was on his legs; and another infant, Christopher, who never reached boyhood, and had only lately come into the world, was still in arms. As the father contemplates his children, his mind naturally recurs to the place where his own childhood was spent, and he wishes he could see them running about on the Bawn at Ballyduffe, as himself was wont to do.*

William Burke too, in these letters, appears upon the scene. He had been visiting his friends in Ireland, and was going there again. Edmund hopes that if William be delayed in his journey, his family will not be uneasy, as he might have to wait at Chester some days, for a friend.

This is the William Burke who was Edmund's com-

* Letters in New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 380-2.

panion in his early excursions in search of health and amusement. They were still as intimately connected, and Burke's fire-side was the home of his friend. An obscurity hangs over William Burke, which all the efforts of biographers and critics have not succeeded in penetrating. Some facts, which may render the intimacy between Edmund and William Burke less mysterious, may however be plainly deduced from Burke's published letters, and particularly from that extremely interesting vindictory epistle which Burke, in 1771, addressed to their common friend Dr. Markham.

It is clear that William Burke really was a relation; for he emphatically alludes to him in that letter as my kinsman.* It is clear that William Burke was educated in England, and that his early life and habits were well known to Dr. Markham. It is also clear that William Burke introduced Edmund to the divine, and was the means of establishing that close friendship which existed between them for so many years. This acquaintance commenced in 1754, before Burke had made any noise in the world; for he speaks of the Doctor, in 1771, as his seventeen years' friend. It must have speedily ripened into the closest intimacy; as after Burke's son Richard was born, Dr. Markham answered for him at his baptism, and always took the greatest interest in his godson's welfare.

A native of Ireland, Dr. Markham had been educated in England. In 1734 he had been chosen a King's Scholar of Westminster, and five years afterwards went to that citadel of orthodoxy, Christ Church, Oxford. He became the college friend of William Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, who steadily patronized a divine with a

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 161.

disposition so congenial to his own. Dr. Markham had been about a year Head-master of Westminster School when Burke first became known to him; and was in high repute both for learning and piety. Though he was an excellent schoolmaster, his time was equally divided between the duties of his situation and his unremitting assiduities to all the great nobles who might advance his interests. Of these the tall and portly pedagogue never lost sight. At once a scholar and a courtier, an ecclesiastic and a man of the world, he was eminently wise in his generation. A pupil on one of his lowest forms, called Jeremy Bentham, even then, with his sceptical eyes, saw the head-master's sycophantic propensities so prominently displayed, that he afterwards represented him as even at that time a Tory. But this was an error. Among the divines who aspired highly in the Church, there were then no Tories. The dignified Dr. Markham, waving his hand and repeating Latin verses, in his many political conversations with Burke, spoke the sentiments of an orthodox Whig.*

In the February of 1759 the Consulship at Madrid became vacant. As eight months elapsed without anyone being chosen for the office, notwithstanding the repeated importunities of Lord Bristol, the English diplomatist at the Spanish Court, Burke began to entertain the hope that through the efforts of his friends he might possibly obtain that appointment. To encourage him in his application, he learnt that Mr. Pitt could not find a

* Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. iv. p. 311. Nichols, Literary Anecdotes. Bowring's Memoirs of Bentham: Bentham's Works, vol. x. p. 30. Burke's Correspondence, Letter to Dr. Markham in 1771. "I thought," said Burke, "that we had in the main the same principles, and that this similarity in the great lines was one of the grounds of your former kindness" (vol. i. p. 336).

suitable person to send out ; and who more proper than one who, like himself, had given so much attention to commercial affairs ? Unfortunately it was autumn, and many influential acquaintances to whom he had written on the subject were out of town. Though Dr. Markham had lately become a Prebend of Durham he was however still at Westminster, and took up his friend's cause most zealously. He wrote a letter to the Duchess of Queensbury, begging her to use her influence with Mr. Pitt in favour of a gentleman who had highly distinguished himself in literature, had paid particular attention to matters of trade, possessed most extensive knowledge along with extraordinary talents for business, and who, in Dr. Markham's opinion, only wanted standing-ground to do his country essential service.

The Duchess of Queensbury was a singular being. At sixty she retained much of that loveliness expressed in her features which had made her a toast among the wits and politicians of her youth. Her oddities in dress, and other eccentricities, were for many years the constant amusement of the Town. By her position and character she was not at all a bad person to fix upon for the purpose of addressing a request to a Minister, as when her feelings or pride were once concerned she would not readily take a refusal. She afterwards extorted from Lord Bute a silk gown for Thurlow solely by her energetic and unceasing importunities. That she did transmit Dr. Markham's letter to the proper quarter is evident ; for it has been published in the Chatham Correspondence.* It remains a striking proof of Dr. Markham's sincere friendship for Burke, and is indeed more honourable even to the writer of it than to him

* Vol. i. p. 430.

whom it was meant to serve. When Mr. Pitt, in this period of victory, the most triumphant in his life and in the English annals, threw that letter aside as unworthy of his attention, he little knew what he was doing.

Of the same time there is another letter in existence, quite as important as this as evidence of Burke's character.

Mrs. Montague had begun her brilliant career in London society, and was gradually becoming acknowledged to be the most accomplished woman of her time. She had not indeed yet established her claim to that rank in literature which she held after the publication of her *Essay on Shakespeare*; nor had even her three clever Dialogues, which she published with those of her friend Lord Lyttelton, been given to the world. Her celebrated mansion in Portman-square had not yet been built. But her sprightliness, conversational powers, wealth, and kindness of heart, had made for her many friends; and her drawing-room in Hill-street was frequented by all who affected literature and wit. Though it was from her assemblies that the word *blue-stockings* took its rise, had every literary lady been half so good or so amiable as Mrs. Montague undoubtedly was, with all her little foibles, it never would have been considered that disagreeable epithet, which, to the shame of the other sex, it at length grew to be.

In a letter from Hill-street, she promises to send her correspondent, Miss Carter, the *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, and makes some remarks on the author. She says that he is a friend of hers, and however excellent as a writer, still more estimable for his virtues. He had none of the pert affectation and presuming ignorance of the age. He was ingenious and ingenuous; modest and delicate; and on all serious subjects, full of respect and

veneration.* This is a picture of Burke, drawn by a lady of judgment and penetration, in 1759, and it will stand for him at any subsequent period of his life.

Mrs. Montague also corresponded with Emin, and her letters have some amusing observations on the ardent Asiatic. During these years he had led a stirring and romantic life; but the convention of Closter Seven had been to him a cruel disappointment. On returning to England, Lord Lyttelton kindly paid the expenses of his studies, which embraced boxing, fencing, and French. He wrote a most curious letter to Mr. Pitt, whose head however was too full of his own schemes of glory to pay much attention to those of Emin. He went to the army of the King of Prussia; but foreign adventurers found little favour in the eyes of Frederick William. His heart and mind still bore up against all disappointments. "I wish," Mrs. Montague observes, "Emin's patriotic spirit was communicated to a dozen or two of our great men; it is a shame that there should be more of it in the breast of an Armenian slave, born in bondage and nurtured in ignorance, than in those who count a long line of ancestors, and by a liberal education have before them all the patriots Greece and Rome produced." Again, in writing to Lord Lyttelton, she says, "I have enclosed a letter I received from Emin last post; I am sure your Lordship will approve his not returning to England, and particularly his delicacy in not exposing his friends to the imputation of having protected an impostor. You will find his mind is still at the top of the heroic strain. An Asiatic, a savage, and a hero in a fever, is a very terrible animal."†

* Mrs. Elizabeth Montague's Letters, vol. iv. p. 211.

† *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 51; vol. iv. p. 222.

Shortly after this, Emin found his way back to Calcutta, and was received with joy by his father and acquaintances. The poor wanderer was looked upon with pride and wonder. Though he had not realized all his dreams, he had come nearer to what he had aspired than fallen short of it; and all those reptile souls who are ready to applaud success, met him with open arms. But he did not long remain in India. His restless mind pined for action. The Duke of Northumberland was still his friend; and the Russian Government thought that his generous enthusiasm and adventurous spirit might do good service in the war which was then raging in Georgia. The last one hears of him in Mrs. Montague's Letters is in the September of 1761, when, by a mistake of his patron, his Grace of Northumberland, he was disappointed in sailing in the ship he expected to take him to the Russian shores, and Emin was in convulsions of impatience at the delay.

The Armenian seems so far to have been more fortunate than his first and greatest friend, who still had many difficulties to encounter. The helping hand Burke was so ready to hold out to others was not readily grasped in his need by those who might, with so little trouble, have done themselves so much honour, and their country and mankind so much good. Disappointed in his application for the Consulship at Madrid, and his merits overlooked by Mr. Pitt, he calmly set himself to compile the Annual Register for 1759, and record that splendid series of triumphs, opening with the conquest of Guadaloupe, and followed in rapid succession by the bombardment of Hâvre, the defeat of the French fleet off Cape Lagos, the acquisitions of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, the capture of Niagara, the achievements of Wolfe on the heights

of Abraham, with the consequent surrender of Quebec, and closing late in November by the destruction of the fleet and armament under Conflans, amid rocks and shoals, storm and thunder, on the coast of Brittany. Such a year of conquest Englishmen had never lived; and it deserved such a chronicler. Well might people exclaim with rapture and amazement, “What a year!” as it expired in a blaze of glory.*

The death of Wolfe in the moment of victory, touched all hearts. Many affecting elegies, many eloquent eulogies, appeared in the newspapers and magazines. Even Mr. Pitt undertook to do honour to the youthful hero, by delivering a set oration upon his merits in the House of Commons. But the few words which Burke spoke over Wolfe’s tomb, condense into two sentences all that poets and orators could utter; and in their energy and simplicity are not unworthy of Pericles, as he speaks that noble funeral oration, which still, after the lapse of more than two thousand years, thrills the bosoms of all who read the lofty pages of Thucydides. “The death of Wolfe,” says Burke, “was indeed grievous to his country, but to himself the most happy that can be imagined; and the most be envied by all those who have a true relish for military glory. Unindebted to family connections, unsupported by intrigue or faction, he had accomplished the whole business of life at a time when others are only beginning to appear; and at the age of thirty-five, without feeling the weakness of age or the vicissitude of fortune, having satisfied his honest ambition, having completed his character, having fulfilled the ex-

* “Thus we wind up this wonderful year! Who, that died three years ago, and could revive, would believe it?”—Walpole’s Letters, vol. iv. p. 5.

pectations of his country, he fell at the head of his conquering troops, and expired in the arms of Victory.”*

The man who could thus elevate literary drudgery, and from his study in Wimpole-street, Cavendish-square, make the new Annual Register the medium of such exalted sentiments on the world as it is stirring around him, was not likely to despair amid the embarrassments of the hour. Honour to the brave who have fallen in the path of duty! Honour to the brave who are still courageously struggling onward!

It was not enough to strew laurels over the grave of the hero who had fallen in the field of battle. Burke's beneficence may be discerned, in the same Annual Register for 1759, eager to assist the living. There is a review of Rasselas, most unquestionably from his pen; and after justly criticizing the tale, and quoting the description of the Happy Valley, he concludes with an impressive sentence about Johnson. He says, “Though the author has not put his name to this work, there is no doubt that he is the same who has before done so much for the improvement of our taste and our morals, and employed a great part of his life in an astonishing work for the fixing the language of this nation, *whilst the nation which admires his works, and profits by them, has done nothing for the author.*”† This is a winged sentence, and may have reached the quarter for which it was destined. What we know with certainty is, that the pension was afterwards granted; and whether or not this review was seen at this time by Lord Bute, his friends, and his Royal pupil, the fact, which has perhaps escaped the observation of those who have written on the literature of the time, that Burke made the first public sug-

* Annual Register, 1759, p. 41.

† *Ibid.*, p. 479.

gestion of Johnson's pension, may be considered as established.

With this interesting circumstance we may now take leave of that portion of Burke's life connected purely with authorship. Much that is interesting, much that is even new, might perhaps without difficulty be added; but in a career, of which the leading feature is not literature, but politics, enough on the first point has probably been said.

Burke was connecting himself with his first patron. He was warmly grasping what he supposed to be a staff of support, but which turned out to be but a broken reed, piercing the hand that would have faithfully trusted in its strength. The history of this unfortunate connection is full of instruction to the young aspirant, who, with his wallet of knowledge and hope upon his shoulders, is starting on the rugged road to power. Burke found that not only was the temple of honour seated on an eminence, but on an eminence which receded as the toiling pilgrim seemed approaching the brow.

CHAPTER VIII.

1759-1763.

FIRST EFFORTS AGAINST OPPRESSION.

IN the November of 1755, when, after so many tranquil years of Parliamentary lassitude, the standard of opposition was raised by Pitt against the coalition of Fox and Newcastle, a young man spoke for the first time in the great Debate on the Address. The discussion lasted from three in the afternoon until five o'clock the next morning. Nearly every Member who had any pretensions to oratory took his part in this war of words. There were displayed the pathetic lamentation of Grenville, the pedantic diffusiveness of Lyttelton, the bold argumentation of Nugent, the pointed brevity of Legge, the studied wit of Dodington, the affected roughness of Dashwood, the defensive subtlety of Murray, the weighty logic of Fox, the overpowering eloquence of Pitt.

From among many speeches of great merit, two stood out from the rest in unrivalled excellence. One of them was that of Pitt, who on this night seemed to surpass himself in richness, sublimity, and variety; the other was the maiden speech of the young Member whose voice was then heard for the first time; and, though he sat in Parliament for almost a generation after this memorable night, for the last time, with perhaps but one exception, in the British House of Commons. That this

effusion deserved all the praise it received there can be no doubt. Members cheered the new speaker, whose appearance was pleasing, his voice impressive, his manner spirited, his speech full of argumentative antithesis, his occasional discursions out of the track of his oration in reply to his opponents, lively and easy.* From that hour the highest hopes were entertained of him, and which nothing but some singular deficiencies, not so much in his intellect as in his heart, could have disappointed.

He was the son of the first Scottish lawyer who pleaded at the English bar. Before the Session of Parliament, in which he distinguished himself so highly by that one speech, he had long been anxiously considering to which of the statesmen of the day he should become attached. At last he fixed his eyes on Fox. His choice was characteristic; the motives of it characteristic; the method he took of introducing himself to the Minister's notice, exquisitely characteristic. He made no profession of public principle. It was not, because he thought Henry Fox better able to govern England, than his proud and aspiring antagonist, that William Gerard Hamilton determined to put his trust in the man to whom the Duke of Newcastle was at last consenting to grant some little share of power, in order that the House of Commons might be efficiently led. Such a motive would have been entirely beyond this young man's comprehension. He went straight to Fox, and told him frankly that as he saw who would be the most considerable man in the kingdom, his talents were at Mr. Fox's service. He was not, he said, in a hurry. Without disclaiming ambition, as his fortune was ample, he could afford to wait.†

* Walpole's Collected Letters, vol. iii. p. 171.

† Walpole's George II., vol. ii. p. 44.

The disciple of Walpole could appreciate the value of such an acquisition, made in such a manner ; and very shortly after the delivery of his famous speech, Hamilton's patient ambition was somewhat early gratified by a seat at the Board of Trade.

He spoke again, but he did not meet with so much applause as at first. The terrors of failure beset him ; he might lose his oratorical reputation. He took the extraordinary method to preserve it, of never again opening his mouth in the English Parliament. Some day, as session after session slipped by, he thought of making a great effort which would throw all other speeches into the shade ; session after session passed on, but the great day never came.

Nevertheless his fortune advanced. For years it seemed that he might live on the celebrity he had acquired. His mind was highly cultivated ; his taste only too fastidious. So careful was he in the choice of his diction, that if on consideration he thought a single expression in an ordinary note might be improved, he would recall his servant, and deliberately re-write the whole composition. Positive convictions he had none. On politics he had even scarcely an opinion. That which he stated in his Parliamentary Logic seems to have constituted his whole political creed ; he tells the young aspirant to Parliamentary renown that so much was to be said both for and against any measure, it was impossible to declare beforehand what was good or what was evil, and that it was only when a choice had been made, it should be acquiesced in and defended. On this principle of negation, this base scepticism of a narrow mind and of a cold heart, he systematically acted throughout a long life. So far from speaking in the House of Com-

mons, for many years, when the greatest constitutional principles were at stake, he refrained even from expressing in private, to his most intimate acquaintances, any opinion which might commit him to either one side or the other.* He had many admirers and flatterers, to some of whom he gave much; but he never had, as he never deserved to have, a friend; nor did he ever know what true friendship was. To those who in any way depended on him, if they showed the slightest manliness and dignity, he would be tyrannical and insolent; to those who had no occasion for his good offices, and who ventured even to treat him ill, he would be humble and respectful. In person he was tall; his countenance was even handsome; there was an air of aristocratic grace and lofty superiority in all he said and did; he was sarcastic; he was clever; he was remarkably intelligent; he wrote well; he talked well; he did his best in all societies to be prepossessing and fascinating; but, in spite of himself, his presence chilled; and an acute observer could not but see that, notwithstanding all his endeavours to please, and all his varied accomplishments, William Gerard Hamilton was one of the meanest, most selfish, timid, crafty, and deceitful of human beings.†

With this man it was the fate of Burke to become connected about the close of the year 1759. To Hamilton he was introduced by a young Irish nobleman,‡ who was then only known for his many amiable qualities, his love of literature and art, and the fund of lively information which he had acquired in his travels through Europe and

* Preface to Parliamentary Logic, by Malone.

† Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 34. Madame d'Arblay's Diary.

‡ Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont, vol. i. p. 119.

Asia, but who was also destined to play no mean part in the history of Ireland. It was natural that Burke should sympathize with Lord Charlemont. They were nearly of the same age ; they had many pursuits in common ; and they had both, what at that time was so rare among distinguished Irishmen, a strong affection for Ireland and a just indignation at her wrongs. The day of the trading patriot had not yet dawned. It was then a great virtue in any Irishman, and a greater in a young Irish nobleman, familiar with all the attractions of English society, to love his native country.

And James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont, did love Ireland well, if not always wisely. A patriotic halo encircles his memory, and it seems harsh to say one word which might throw a transient cloud over his subdued and mellow lustre. But though he admired Burke from their first acquaintance, though he steadily endeavoured to serve him, though their ideas on so many political questions coincided, there was still one important subject, and that too relating to Ireland, on which they were decidedly opposed. It is a curious fact, indicating how strong is the power of early prejudices over the most liberal of minds, that Lord Charlemont, who so earnestly laboured for the independence of the Irish Legislature, and whose whole heart was bent in seeing established a just and enlightened Government, could not perceive that this independence and justice must be mere names, unless the Roman Catholics, composing the great majority of Irishmen, were admitted to every privilege of their Protestant brethren. Without this great and healing measure, adopted resolutely as the guiding principle in the amelioration of Ireland, Burke saw that all other reforms must be useless, and indeed positively pernicious ;

since the more the minority of Irishmen acquired political power, and grew in national dignity, the more galling must the fetters on the unenfranchised majority become. This, Lord Charlemont could not understand. He could not therefore appreciate the logical tendency of his own efforts in the cause of his country. In truth, though ardent, generous, patriotic, liberal, he was not a statesman, but only a well-meaning and perfectly disinterested politician.

Such as he was however, he did much good in making Burke and Hamilton acquainted. Unhappy as the connection was for Burke himself, it was of good omen to his down-trodden native land. Two years of this intimacy were spent in England, during which, as the friend and companion of Hamilton's studies, Burke was obliged to discontinue his work on English history, and all other studies of his own. The bond uniting the two men seemed a pleasant one; Hamilton introduced Burke into society, and Burke gave Hamilton, what he much wanted, ideas; but these fetters, which at first seemed of silk, were found at length to be of iron, corroding the flesh and insidiously attacking the heart.

The precise nature of this connection has been much disputed. It is not however difficult to understand. Hamilton, with an instinctive sense of his wants, sought the support of minds more energetic and courageous than his own. He knew the importance of literature in the State, and eagerly sought the society of authors; who were in return flattered by the notice of such a distinguished politician. It was Burke's literary reputation, as much as Lord Charlemont's introduction, which first procured for him Hamilton's questionable friendship.*

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 25.

Hamilton clung for support to Burke; and as soon as he lost him, he thought of clinging to Johnson, whom he fondly hoped might render similar services. It is a curious fact that, very shortly after Hamilton's rupture with Burke, Dr. Johnson's Prayers and Meditations record that the moralist was about to study politics with H——n. This was evidently a secret understanding, as Hamilton, when asked on the subject after Johnson's death, would give no information; and it was not usual for the Doctor to use initials instead of names. Johnson thought this undertaking so sufficiently important as to justify him in commencing it with a private prayer; and, had he known Hamilton's character as well as his friend Burke did, this knowledge might have lent additional fervour to his solemn supplication 'that no deceit might mislead him, and no temptation corrupt him.* The project seems to have been stopped at the outset. Hamilton always remained on friendly terms with Johnson, professed the highest respect for him, and readily offered to advance him money during his last illness;† but a safe political adviser the old man of letters, with his strong prejudices, could not be; of the science of government he knew literally nothing; and Hamilton probably soon discovered that Samuel Johnson was not Edmund Burke.

At first Burke did not find his union with Hamilton disagreeable. They talked and wrote together. Hamilton had a country residence, in which as much of his time as could be spared from public business was not unpleasantly spent. His official duties at the Board of Trade were not very heavy; and he was not a man to do more than for what he was punctually paid in sterling coin of

* Prayers and Meditations, p. 66.

† Boswell.

the realm. What could be more delightful than to walk among Hamilton's trees and flowers at Hampton Court, drink tea with him in his treillage-arbour, and converse with him and other fashionable notabilities about the authors, actors, and statesmen of past times? Happy days indeed they were, with the sunshine of hope gilding the future!

Horace Walpole visited Hamilton one day at this season of the intimacy with Burke. The accomplished cynic on this occasion met the young political philosopher for the first time, and it is interesting to see the favourable impression Burke at once made on the most fastidious and sceptical of all observers. Walpole considered him very modest, amiable, and intelligent, but thinking much too highly of literature, and the world of authors he was quitting. Perhaps Burke thought that as Horace himself had published many volumes, had a considerable literary reputation, and professed to be a patron of historical and antiquarian lore, he might safely introduce and converse on these intellectual topics. Walpole however pretended to laugh at this enthusiasm. "Young Mr. Burke has not," wrote Horace, "worn off his authorism yet, and thinks there is nothing so charming as writers, and to be one." The son of Sir Robert added, with a significant smile, "He will know better one of these days." These remarks were however not made unkindly, and there might be some truth in them, as they were made from the point of view of the Gothic windows of Strawberry Hill, with the Thames gliding softly by, picturesque green barges diversifying that most delightful of all English landscapes, and the aristocratic turrets of retired dowagers just peeping out from among the trees.*

* Walpole's Collected Letters, vol. iv. p. 160.

But Burke's authorship was almost relinquished for his patron's private business. There seems to have been a tacit understanding that no more books should be written ; certainly, though his wants were pressing, no more books were written. His labours at the Annual Register were somehow or other continued ; but that was all.*

This long waiting on Hamilton and Providence, which it was the fate of his son-in-law to undergo, must have strained good Dr. Nugent's resources. The household gods of the united family were now set up in Queen Anne-street ; and on the mild physician, more than on any other person, devolved the whole of the stern and anxious duty of keeping the wolf from the threshold. Unlike Mr. Richard Burke the elder, the kind doctor seems never to have despaired of Edmund's future, nor have doubted for one moment of the high destiny to which he was born. One precious letter from Burke to Mr. Agmondisham Vesey, of Lucan, has been preserved, and from it we get the last glimpse of the old solicitor, whose misfortune it was to have born to him this provoking son, who was a great genius, and who would not be a great lawyer.

Mr. Vesey was the friend of Mrs. Montague and Lord Lyttelton ; and he had recently returned with his wife

* Burke's testimony, which on this question, as on all others relating to his own history, must be superior to mere rumours and conjectures, is, that during his intimacy with Hamilton, he was taken from every pursuit of literary reputation. If William Burke therefore did write an answer to Lord Bath's pamphlet on the policy of retaining Canada, Edmund took no part in such a controversy ; and he certainly never could have advised England to give up the North American Colonies, which she had so gloriously taken from France by force of arms, and the acquisition of which were associated with the most heroic and affecting episode of the war.

to Ireland for the summer, after their usual season in the English metropolis. At this time he was so intimately acquainted with Burke, as to undertake the office of mediator between him and his irascible father. He wrote to Burke, assuring him that his endeavours to bring about a reconciliation had been successful, and also enclosed him a material guarantee to that effect from Mr. Richard in the form of a remittance. Burke expressed his gratitude to his friend for the assurances of his father's reconciliation, as well as for the remittance; whatever advantage the money was, and he left it to be inferred that it was extremely acceptable, he dutifully considered his father's returning kindness still more pleasing.* Old Mr. Burke's days were fast drawing to a close. He was to quarrel not many more times with his son. Neither was he to enjoy the pleasures of reconciliation much longer; neither was he to send any more remittances. In the November of the following year he was to bid adieu to a world in which he had found so much to sour his temper; and his son's waywardness and imprudence were to exasperate him no longer. Burke was however, at the time of his father's death, in Ireland, and, it may hoped, was at hand to render him the sad though consolatory offices of filial piety.

A month after the letter to Mr. Vesey, George II. died. Now was the time for Lord Bute and the Princess Dowager, and all who, with true Persian idolatry, had so long, from the windows of Leicester House, been religiously watching for the first beams of the rising sun. The long night at length had spent itself, and the bright morning had dawned, delighting the feverish eyes of those who had so earnestly hoped and prayed for the new world of the

* New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 382.

morrow. But Burke was not one of those who, while eagerly courting the living, thought it becoming to insult the dead. He drew a full-length character of George II. in the Annual Register ; and everything that could possibly be said in favour of the departed monarch, will be found comprised in that beautiful panegyric.* All the truth indeed is not told ; but it is not in the first months succeeding the death of any great monarch that all the truth is ever told. This garland may therefore remain undisturbed on George II.'s tomb.

In the March of 1761 the Earl of Halifax was appointed to succeed the Duke of Bedford as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. This nobleman had been for some years President of the Board of Trade, and had become acquainted with Hamilton, of whose abilities he had formed a high opinion. In the government of Ireland, Burke's patron was associated, by being selected for the very responsible office of Chief Secretary. Burke was to go with Hamilton ; and thus, under favourable auspices, as the confidential friend of the Secretary, and as a nondescript indeed, but still an effective member of the Administration, he could take up his abode in the Vice-regal precincts of Dublin Castle. After eleven years of hard struggling, a glimpse of good fortune had at length appeared.

His joy at thus returning to Dublin, in such a situation, may easily be imagined. The path of ambition, which had been so tortuous, now seemed straight before him ; and far on the distant horizon rose before his ardent eyes the prospect, through his efforts, of an emancipated and a regenerated Ireland. Difficulties indeed there were in the way ; but he was not one to be deterred from an ob-

* Annual Register, 1760, p. 39.

ject on which he had set his heart, by any obstacles raised by prejudice, ignorance, and tyranny. He was of a ripe age, his judgment matured, his principles settled, full of knowledge both of books and of the world. What might not one with such accomplishments and aspirations achieve?

There does not seem to have been much friendship between him and the Lord Lieutenant. The character of the Earl of Halifax was not such as to excite in Burke's mind any enthusiastic veneration. He had some of the Duke of Bedford his predecessor's virtues, and many of his failings. In his youth the highest expectations had been formed of his abilities; but the ripened fruit of his manhood was far inferior to the promise of the early blossom. As the head of the Board of Trade he had shown much industry, and an anxious though not always a judicious desire to promote the interests of the Colonies. This was the brightest part of his career. In his subsequent years he was the ostensible author of most violent measures both in domestic and colonial policy, and he was openly attacked by Burke. His temper was violent; he became the slave of an unworthy attachment. If the Duke of Bedford did wrong through the imprudent advice of his wife, Lord Halifax did worse through the shameful influence of a sordid mistress.

In Ireland he was moderate and decorous. His Secretary, too, was not like Rigby, jovial, profligate, and disdainful of appearances. Hamilton might be vain, sullen, proud, cold, and envious;* but he was all the stricter in attending to the proprieties of his station.

He was certainly an able Chief Secretary. The impression he made in Ireland remained long after his ad-

* Burke's Works, vol. i. p. 43.

ministration had undergone the fate of all Governments and all men. Invested with the imposing dignity of a great office, and surrounded by people who treated him with the utmost respect, as it was the habit of Irishmen in those days to pay to all Viceroys and their Secretaries, Hamilton laid aside his bashful timidity, and on important questions delivered set orations in the Irish House of Commons. His eloquence made many converts ; he bore down like an impetuous torrent on all who opposed the measures of his Government ; and Irish gentlemen began to imitate that style of speaking which they so much admired. As yet Ireland had had no orators. It is a curious and most instructive fact that it was William Gerard Hamilton, nicknamed "single speech," who by the admiration his eloquence caused, and the emulation he provoked, first blew into a flame the brilliant fire of Irish oratory. It was while listening to him that Henry Flood became ambitious of being a great speaker ; he succeeded ; he roused others ; and for good or for evil the musical tongue of Ireland was loosened.

When Hamilton first reached the Castle he probably had no decided views on any questions of Irish legislation or policy. To his friend, standing a little in the background, but observing with earnest eyes the condition of the Roman Catholic majority of his countrymen, much of what he afterwards brought definitely to the hearts and minds of all the British Empire, at once appeared. The penal code and its effects, now merely a matter of rhetorical allusion, stood forth then in all its black atrocity. Englishmen of the present day have heard and read of, and in other countries may have witnessed, what they have deemed tyrannical misgovernment : but never, throughout the history of mankind, has there

been in all that long and bloody record of oppression, anything equal in wickedness to the Statute-Book of Ireland. Cold, ferocious, inhuman, systematic, these enactments can never be excused on account of misguided religious zeal ; nor was the preservation of the Protestant religion their real design. They had their origin in national hatred and injustice ; their object was not to uphold the Church of England, but to extirpate a people. To the comprehensive glance of Hamilton's companion and adviser, traces of the penal code were seen before the Reformation.*

These laws were well devised for their purpose. They form a code which every tyrant might study and find his knowledge of the surest means of producing human wretchedness extended. He would see at once a terrible engine, made perfect with all the science of political mechanism, for those who, with devilish malignity, would reverse the end of government, and, instead of improving the well-being of the community, deliberately set about the destruction of a race. In comparison with this unrelenting penal code, embracing generation after generation in the pall of its deadly animosity, even the tremendous policy of Cromwell, as it was exhibited amid the ruin and bloodshed of Tredah, was merciful. In a few years Cromwell's object would have been attained, and the Roman Catholics would have disappeared from the face of the land. But the evil effects of the penal code extended far beyond one generation or one century, slowly corrupting, impoverishing, degrading, tormenting, and at last destroying, through the unpitied suffering of three hundred years, all whose misfortune it was to be born Roman Catholics in Ireland.

* Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.

The mere statement of these laws, as they appeared to Burke in 1761, makes the flesh creep and the blood tingle in the veins. They struck at all property, by abolishing, in the case of the Catholic proprietor, the right of primogeniture and any power of testamentary disposal. They struck at all paternal authority, by allowing the eldest son, the moment he conformed to the Established religion, to acquire the reversion and inheritance to the estate, and to reduce his father's right to a mere interest for life. They struck at all the domestic and social affections, by placing the Catholic husband in the power of the Protestant wife, who at her pleasure could deprive him of the management and education of his children. They struck at all the rights of citizenship, by not only preventing the Catholic from filling offices in the State, but by excluding him from the army, from the law, from the bench of magistrates, from the freedom of a corporation, and from being a mere lawyer's clerk. They struck at all the security of social life, by giving a premium to relations and servants, to betray their benefactors and masters. The priest was liable to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. Common informers were encouraged by prodigious rewards. The State nurtured a spy at every Roman Catholic hearth. All the laws of Nature and Providence were reversed. The effect had been produced: the country was thoroughly divided against itself: in one land there were two distinct races. The worst feature of all, obvious to the passing stranger, was that fatal scowl of hereditary hatred, with which the oppressors and the oppressed regarded each other.

Some of the recent Lord-Lieutenants had begun to exhibit a few transient indications of pity at the sight of

the dreadful system of oppression. The Duke of Bedford, so far as his good intentions exhibited themselves, really did feel some sentiments of compassion for the suffering multitude; and thus disappointed the violent Protestants, who hoped that a descendant of Lord Russell would inherit that animosity against the Catholics, which in some degree tarnished the bright patriotism of that distinguished assertor of freedom. But it was the Duke of Bedford's misfortune as a politician, that his good intentions seldom had any relation with his acts. The first direct measure in favour of the Catholics was introduced into the Irish House of Commons by that Chief Secretary of whom Edmund Burke was the adviser; and there can be little question that it originated in his suggestions.

As the Catholic gentry had no profession in their native country, they were driven to look for employment abroad. The French army was readily open to them; and they had in many fields of battle fought against the land of their birth. To the best of them this had long been a subject of deep regret. Nothing could be more impolitic than unnaturally to drive by penal laws such men into the ranks of our enemies, and to leave them no other home than a hostile shore. The war with Spain, notwithstanding Lord Bute's shallow confidence, at last could not be warded off. It was necessary for the English Government to provide for the defence of the natural ally, Portugal, directly menaced with a Spanish invasion, and the combined enmity of the House of Bourbon. The expedient was adopted by the English Council of raising six regiments from among the

* This is positively stated in Gifford's Life of Pitt: even amid errors a glimpse of truth may be seen. See vol. iii. p. 162.

Irish Catholics, and sending them to Portugal. The officers were also to be Irish gentlemen of the same persuasion, and the Brigade was to be paid by the Court of Lisbon. This was following out, though in a more circuitous manner, the course of policy which Pitt had originated with regard to the Scottish Highlanders, and, had it been resolutely pursued, might have produced equally beneficial results.

Hamilton introduced a motion on the subject into the Irish House of Commons, and made a speech of remarkable ability and eloquence in its favour. The Secretary outdid himself on the occasion. Lord Charlemont* spoke of that oration, in terms of enthusiasm as great as those which Horace Walpole employed in relating the effect of the same gentleman's maiden speech in England. But Hamilton's eloquence could not teach moderation to bigots. The Protestants of the south of Ireland felt much the same indignation as that with which the slave-owners of New Orleans now look upon the efforts of the Abolitionists. A great outcry arose from one end of the country to the other; the Government yielded to the clamour of intolerance; the measure was abandoned; and so ended the first Ministerial effort since the Revolution, in favour of the Irish Catholics.

Burke's feelings on this subject may be easily imagined. How he must have rejoiced when the sanction of the English Privy Council was at last obtained for the introduction of the Bill! With what fervour he must have discussed the question with Hamilton! With what eagerness and anxiety must he have watched the progress of the measure! How many of Hamilton's

* Hardy, vol. i. p. 130.

glowing periods must have taken their inspiration from that inexhaustible source of eloquence and wisdom ! With what contempt must Burke have heard the rising growl of that mongrel Protestantism of Ireland, which began to fear that its prey might escape from its envenomed fangs ! And with what internal rage, with what bitter agony, with what unutterable scorn, must he have seen the Government, which always showed so much determined perseverance in every unconstitutional measure when its own authority was interested, thus weakly give up this first attempt at peace, unity, and concord !

He was not a man to conceal his feelings. There must have been some singularly dramatic scenes in Dublin Castle, between the lukewarm Secretary and his earnest if yet humble friend. Burke would dwell on the wretchedness of the country, the impolicy of England, like a step-mother, rejecting the kindness of Ireland's bravest sons, and the real danger to Government in permitting itself on such a question to be overawed by sectarian prejudices. And Hamilton would listen with that simpering leer, which all his efforts could not convert into an ingenuous smile, and which the painter has still preserved for those who would study human character as it is expressed by the lip, eye, and brow.

The state of Tipperary, Cork, Limerick, and Kilkenny might have rendered the most apathetic of Chief Secretaries anxious about his administration. Burke's arguments for perseverance in measures of relief could not but have received additional force from the disturbances then pervading Munster. It seemed as though there were limits to the passive endurance of perpetual wretchedness ; and the insurgents, under the name of Whiteboys, were making fatal progress. When a whole

people are driven to utter despair, when they have no comfort in the present nor hope in the future, when they see, wherever they turn their hollow eyes, nothing but a low and dreary horizon of endless misery, from which there is no escape, and when even the Heaven above them seems overcast by the misty exhalations from the stagnant waste in which they are imprisoned by intangible chains forged in the fiery furnace of man's evil passions, is it wonderful that they should, in their wild excitement, make frantic attempts to dash out their own brains and those of their oppressors? In such a spirit did the mad outbreaks of the Whiteboys take their rise; and in such a spirit, through many sad years, owing to the criminal incapacity of the Government, did they continue. Political grievances at length produced inveterate social disorders. The disturbances radiated through many counties; and it became the fashion to kill cattle, to burn mills, and pull down enclosures. Ricks blazed, and at night the flames of wanton devastation reddened the sky. The natural effect of such folly and wickedness followed. Miserable before, the poor became much more miserable. Poor before, they became much poorer. Bread became dearer, wages lower, and work scarcer. In vain did the law put forth its terrors; in vain was the gibbet set up on every highway. The disease had become chronic; it was seated in the heart; and could not be cured even by the violent antiphlogistic remedies of the hangman and his gallows.

Burke placed on record the circumstances attending the first commencement of this dreadful calamity. He saw what the evil was, from the beginning, and that the only remedy was to bring the great body of the people within the pale of the constitution. Four-and-thirty

years afterwards he reminded Sir Hercules Langrishe of their first conversations on this subject in 1761, and justly affirmed that his opinions had never varied.* Langrishe was an industrious Member of Parliament, a true friend of Ireland, and an able man of business. Their love for their native country, and their commiseration of the Catholics, bound Burke and him together in close friendship from this time forward; and it was therefore to him that the two letters on the Catholic question, from Burke's pen, in the last period of his life, were most appropriately addressed. The other acquaintances of Burke, during his semi-official connection with the Castle, were politicians, who, as far as they dared, began to entertain, probably under his inspiration, the same enlightened views.

The two most distinguished rivals in Irish political affairs, were, at this time, John Hely Hutchinson and Henry Flood. Burke desired to see them promote the welfare of all religious persuasions, and especially of that one which was most oppressed, and which included the great majority of their countrymen. Hutchinson had only left the ranks of the Opposition, which consisted of course at that time of place-hunters, as the Ministerialists consisted of place-holders, the year before Hamilton commenced his administration by accepting the office of Prime Sergeant. His wit and vivacity soon made him of great use to Government. The Chief Secretary himself remarked that Hely Hutchinson, as a speaker in support

* Second Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.—Works, vol. vi. p. 51.
“These things were discussed together four or five and thirty years ago. We were then, and at bottom ever since, of the same opinion on the justice and policy of the whole and of every part of the penal system.”—May 26, 1795.

of the Ministry, was beyond all praise, as he was one of the few orators possessed of the serviceable talent of going out in all weathers.* Wherever the storm ran highest, there was the playful brilliancy of Hutchinson to be seen, pleasing the eye and charming the ear. After such dazzling flashes of political raillery, Flood's harsh thunder seemed divested of half its terrors, and rolled innocuously over the ministerial benches. Dark, fierce, energetic, and severe, Flood had however one quality, without which all oratory is of little value, that of genuine earnestness. He at last fully vindicated the superiority of a real orator over a pleasant speaker. Flood had some failings; his career does not shine out in one beam of consistent splendour; but he was the first Irish Member who really established an opposition to Government in the Irish Parliament, on national principles; and he made the road quite straight for Grattan afterwards to pursue, with more steadiness and greater honour. Neither Hutchinson nor Flood indeed advocated, during Hamilton's secretaryship, the great measures of essential justice which they afterwards promoted. But though the one was in office and the other in opposition, where their own personal interests were not concerned, their steps took the direction in which Burke was so eager to marshal them, in order to attain commercial freedom and religious equality for Ireland.

'The tenour of Burke's thoughts, as he then observed, from his obscure but excellent position, the course of Irish affairs, are happily not matter of conjecture. At all periods of his life, it was however his fate to have his counsels disregarded; and now, as though to season him for what he might expect as he advanced in his career,

* Hardy, vol. i. p. 143.

he had the vexation of seeing the Government, of which he was an unauthorized but yet a real adviser, act directly contrary to his decided opinions, and treat the Catholics with still greater severity. He could not then express what he felt ; it is only from transient indications, in subsequent years, that we can judge of the intensity of his feelings on this occasion. He particularly takes the year 1761,—the very year in which Lord Halifax became Viceroy,—as that in which a truly savage period began with regard to the Catholics, and was continued by succeeding Lord-Lieutenants until the year 1767.*

The proposition for embodying six Roman Catholic regiments for foreign service, was then but a faint gleam of ministerial benevolence, succeeded by still darker tyranny. Such was the essential contradiction between Burke and the high executive authorities of the Castle, that while they were remorselessly straining the intolerant laws, to gratify the domineering spirit of the Protestant aristocracy, he was meditating a scheme for the entire demolition of the penal code, and of establishing on its ruins a temple of concord, in which all Irishmen might unite harmoniously together to promote the interests of their common country. That the oppression which he believed the adherents of the ancient faith had endured, and the true nature of those rebellions, which seem to proceed from such inadequate causes, as they are generally related by English historians, might be thoroughly understood, he made use of his residence in Ire-

* Letter to William Smith, vol. vi. p. 45.—“I remember but one period in my whole life, I mean the savage period between 1761 and 1767, in which the Catholics have been more harshly or contumaciously treated than since the last partial enlargement.”

land to urge his learned and honest friend, Dr. Leland, then rapidly rising to the highest academic eminence in Trinity College, to set about writing the history of Ireland.

He began himself to collect materials for an elaborate work on the penal laws. Some years after his death a part of the work was published, and the plan of which was supposed by the editors to have been formed very shortly after the year 1765. There can be little doubt that this is a mistake, and that the subject first assumed a definite shape in his mind, not after, but before that year. His own express testimony proves that his opinions on that question were settled long before 1765. It is plain that it was while he saw those hideous laws in operation during his connection with the Chief Secretary, he began to trace their history from the source, and observe the blighting influence they had had on the social and commercial prosperity of Ireland. The work, intended to contain the result of his observations and reflections, had no title given to it by Burke himself in its imperfect state. But even in this rude and incomplete condition, there are none of his works which have so much unity of design and closeness of reasoning. Sensible of the importance of method, in treating such a question, he carefully laid down the plan before commencing to write a single sentence, and throughout endeavoured strictly to adhere to this design. For once he seems to have checked his habitual tendency to discursiveness, and studiously develops his matter in a clear and unbroken order. The work is what he himself called it, an essay,* systematic and logical, on the nature, causes, and consequences of the penal laws, treated in the highest

* Works, vol. vi. p. 14.

spirit of the political philosopher. The injudicious title of Tract or Tracts, which was prefixed to it when posthumously published, appears to have prevented it from receiving so much attention as it deserves. No equal portion of Burke's writing is superior to this fragment, either in matter or in manner; it is remarkably suggestive in its spirit, and will well repay the most diligent study.

He intended in the first chapter to give a general introduction, stating how necessary it was to examine minutely into Irish affairs, and to exhibit the penal laws as the principal cause of national misery and social disease. A clear statement of these laws follows, divested of all technicalities, and adapted at once to come home to the understandings and bosoms of men. He then begins to reason upon what he has presented to the comprehension of everybody, and in all his works there is nothing more beautiful than the commencement of this third chapter, in which he establishes, in opposition to Hobbes, and after the example of Cicero, that there is, as the foundation of all law, an essential justice, which can never be disregarded by legislators, and which consists in promoting the comfort and happiness of the whole community. What then can be said for this penal code, made in direct antagonism to the interests, and well-being of two-thirds of a people? Can these laws in any sense be considered just? Nothing can be clearer, it is argued, than that all men, and certainly the majority of men, ought to partake of the advantages for which society exists; and that therefore a law made against the majority of society is a law made against society itself. After centuries of persecution Ireland was full of penalties and full of Papists. Why were these

people almost driven beyond the pale of the law? Prescription, antiquity, experience, prejudice, possession, presumption, were all in their favour; in adhering to their religion, they only adhered to the creed of their fathers, and to what but two centuries before had been the creed of their persecutors themselves. When England was Catholic, the Irish were persecuted for not being devoted enough to Rome; when England had become Protestant, they were persecuted because they were too much devoted to Rome. After thus considering, in a simple and general manner, the hardships and injustice of the penal laws, he begins to open the subject in detail; and there, unfortunately, the manuscript ends.

But Burke did not, as his correspondence proves, limit himself to thinking in private, and writing in his study on the wrongs of the Catholics. He showed, as it was his nature to show, a much more active sympathy. One of his latest acts before he left Ireland for the last time with Hamilton, was to draw up a Petition and Address to the Sovereign for the proscribed people. This paper he left with Dr. John Curry, a literary gentlemen who earnestly exerted his powers in this cause. Fourteen years after this time, when the first direct breach was made in the stronghold of Protestant tyranny, this address was, unknown to its author, actually sent to the King.* When the Act of Parliament was sent over from Ireland to Burke, he was informed how much the document he had drawn up years ago in his obscurity, had contributed to the success of this first lenient measure, by removing in some degree the pre-

* Works, vol. vi. p. 37. Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 238.

judices of George III. So powerful in the political vineyard are the humblest works of him who labours faithfully and truthfully ; either like the grain of mustard seed, they rapidly germinate and increase a thousandfold, or like bread cast upon the waters, appear after many days.

As the first of Burke's efforts against oppression, his wishes, thoughts, and intentions at this time, in favour of the Catholics, have been far too little understood. In his old-age he appealed to those who knew what his sentiments were while he was in Ireland during Lord Halifax's administration, and declared, that they had not in any manner been changed, but were then just as much matured in his mind as at any later period. There were then no Catholic associations, no Catholic agitators, no politicians, in England, prepared to temporize with Catholic Emancipation. Grattan was yet a schoolboy. William Pitt was a mere child. Charles Fox was at Eton, and writing French verses in praise of Lord Bute. Canning was not yet born. Holland House, instead of being the citadel of liberalism, was the noisome receptacle of political corruption. To the great man whose life and works are the subject of these pages, is due the honour of having, not only first commenced the crusade against the penal code, but also that of having, in season and out of season, continued the warfare with more consistency, ardour, and perseverance, than any other statesman of his time, or of the succeeding generation. We have seen that this fragment on the penal laws, his first work on practical politics, was in favour of his oppressed countrymen. We shall see that the last letter he dictated on political affairs, reclining on a couch, with his strength exhausted, with his

last hour fast approaching, and in hasty intervals during the cessation of pain, had the same sacred object. No greater testimony can be borne to the merits of any one than is comprised in the fact that in the narrative of his life plain truth may seem inordinate panegyric.

CHAPTER IX.

1763-1765.

HAMILTON'S FRIEND.

THE desire to trace, in a connected series, Burke's first political aspirations and decided principles, has caused us to overstep the narrow current of private events. Even some great official personages have been neglected. Instead of attending on a courteous Lord Lieutenant and a supercilious Chief Secretary, they have been obliged to wait while what was passing in the mind of the humblest of their advisers has been considered. Yet can no apology be made to them for such a breach of etiquette. The most hurried sentences in a private letter of Hamilton's modest friend, who was opprobriously called his jackal, is now of more interest and importance to the world than their high official deeds. The lion's provider may sometimes be a nobler creature than its master, if the lord of the forest has nothing of the lion but the skin, and especially if beneath the royal tegument there is the heart and soul of a much more obstinate and less courageous animal. We must all worship. Even a Caliban adores a god; and, in default of a real divinity, must for a time take a poor drunkard for one. The delicate Ariel might have done the same had he not been succoured by a Prospero. The fine spirit of Burke may therefore, after being so long imprisoned in the rifts of hard necessity,

be excused for ministering to the earthly necessities of a Hamilton in the hope of, by this means, obtaining freedom and power. The Prospero, with his magic wand of deliverance, had not yet appeared.

The second year of a Lord Lieutenant's government was in those days considered of right to belong to himself. He might pocket the emoluments of his great place without performing its duties. The administration was delivered over to the Lords Justices, and the Viceroy returned to the more congenial atmosphere of London. In England circumstances were rapidly following each other which would render such a Minister as the Earl of Halifax very eager to be at home. The cards were being shuffled, and his Grace the Duke of Newcastle was beholding the honours leave him, and go into other hands. It was a great change, and portended greater. Since the days when Bolingbroke stood waiting, with his blue bag in his hand, amid the sneers of his enemies, at the door of the Council which sat after the death of Queen Anne, so great a revolution in the state of parties as was then in operation had not occurred.

No time was to be lost. George Montague Dunk, Earl of Halifax, and his Chief Secretary, having during the Irish Session maintained in its full extent the authority of the English Privy Council by getting passed in the first instance a Money-bill through the Irish Parliament, provided for the defence of the country by a measure for raising additional forces, and accepted for succeeding Viceroys an increase in the salary to the Lieutenancy of four thousand pounds a year, which was generously offered by the loyal and patriotic Commons, might well hasten to London in order to try their fortunes in the political scramble. Burke of course also came to Eng-

land. He watched the manœuvres of all these great people, and drew secretly his own conclusions, which were not always to the advantage of his good friends and patrons. There was indeed little in that scene of unblushing intrigue to delight one who considered politics as a high science and not a mere game of chance, in which the fortunate might win coronets, ribbons, garters, and high offices, and the losers be set down to do penance, in unpensioned blessedness on the Opposition benches. Lord Halifax was too distinguished a nobleman to have his ministerial abilities wasted in the unofficial air. He soon obtained his reward. He had one great place; another soon waited his acceptance; and so lucky was he, that while chosen to be First Lord of the Admiralty, he was also permitted to remain Lord Lieutenant of Ireland for another year. Some noblemen are not only born great, but have also more greatness thrown upon them, as mountain is heaped upon mountain.

Hamilton was not so successful, though surely he ought to have been. He had in Dublin made at least five great orations, which had been much admired, and the echo of their fame had reached Westminster. But perhaps his weakness began to be found out. Perhaps his want of real force of character and courage to embark heartily with either the Court or the Opposition began to be obvious to more resolute though not more unscrupulous minds. It may be confidently assumed that it was not his virtue which obstructed his promotion. With all his cleverness, it was seen that, in the refined language of political dependants, he had in himself no go.

Since Hamilton was so unfortunate, it was not to be expected that his companion and adviser could have anything awaiting his acceptance. Burke had nothing, and

expected nothing. He was bound by private ties to Hamilton, who was profuse in promises, but very slow in his performances. This connection, from which Burke at first hoped so much, was still not of the slightest pecuniary service. He had given his time and his abilities to Hamilton, and as yet had to comfort himself with expectations. His father's death does not appear to have made him richer; whatever little he might be entitled to, was certainly very little. Men whom he had known in London years ago, as literary and political adventurers, with mental powers and acquirements infinitely inferior to his own, were pushing their way to fortune. Even his friend Dr. Johnson was at last pensioned. Mallet, the infamous editor of Bolingbroke, and with the meanest literary pretensions, found his merits highly appreciated. Wedderburne, whom Burke had advised on his first coming to town, had far outstripped him, and was prospering both in law and in politics. Colonel Barré, a young Irishman, of standing far inferior to his, but who had shared the perils and the glory of Wolfe, had been introduced, under the patronage of Lord Shelburne, into the House of Commons, had made a figure there, and had even ventured to take Pitt by the beard in this citadel of his strength. While the world was so busy, so many new reputations rapidly rising, and so many of his acquaintances in former days steadily advancing, he alone, with Hamilton's ostentatious friendship, seemed making no way at all.

Even literature, the staff to which he had once so confidently trusted, was still laid aside. For some years he had published nothing; he was writing nothing. Yet a reputation for discussion and literature required repeated efforts to keep it alive. On returning from Ireland

to the great Metropolis he received the same impressive lesson which Cicero was taught when returning from Sicily to Rome.* The great struggle of life had gone on as usual; men had been too busily occupied with their own affairs to think of the absent; he had not been much missed; his very name in some places had been forgotten. Such thoughts as these, we know from Burke's subsequent letters on his relation with Hamilton, did come across his mind. Of a sanguine temperament, and naturally faithful however to those whom he considered his friends, he still looked hopefully forward.

His humanity was as active as ever. One little incident of this year, 1762, has been preserved; and whatever doubts there may be of the authenticity of many anecdotes which have been related of him, this must at once be recognized as strictly true. An Irishman, of the name of Johnson, was astonishing the town by his horsemanship. All London crowded to see his feats of agility and his highly trained steeds. Dr. Johnson and Boswell talked of this man's wonderful ability, and the Doctor thought that he fully deserved encouragement, and for sonorous philosophical reasons. He proved what human perseverance could do. One who saw him riding on three horses at once, or dancing upon a wire, might hope, that with the same application in the profession of his choice, he should attain the same success.† Burke, always ready to encourage his countrymen, and curious in all the ramifications of ingenuity, went frequently to the circus. The favourite performance of the evening was that of a handsome black horse, which, at the sound of Johnson's whip, would leave the stable, stand with much docility at his side, then gallop about the ring, and on

* Orat. pro Plancio.

† Boswell.

hearing the crack of the lash again return obediently to its master. On one unfortunate occasion the signal was disregarded. The horse-rider flew into a rage, and by a blow between the ears, struck the noble animal to the earth. The spectators thought the horse was dying, but they had little time to reflect on the sight before they were surprised at seeing a gentleman jump into the ring, rush up to Johnson, and with his eyes flashing, and every muscle in the face quivering with emotion, shout out, " You scoundrel, I have a mind to knock you down." And Johnson would certainly have been laid sprawling in the sawdust beside his panting steed, had not the friends of the gentleman interposed, and prevented him inflicting such summary chastisement. This incident was long remembered. When the relater of it, many years afterwards, heard Burke declaiming, on the floor of the House of Commons, against injustice and oppression, his mind naturally reverted to the time when he saw the same hatred of all cruelty displayed by the same individual as he stood over the prostrate body of the poor black horse, prepared to punish the miscreant who had felled it to the ground.

Shortly after this occurrence, Burke had a first glimpse of ministerial good fortune. At last Hamilton seems to have thought it decent to fulfil, in part, the expectations he had for years held out. Burke was to have a pension from the Irish Treasury of three hundred pounds a year. It was not much, but still it was something ; yet, trifling as it was, it was contrived that it should pass through many hands ; and he felt acutely the annoyance of such ostentatious patronage. The influence of the Chief Secretary was not enough ; not only through

* Preface to Parliamentary Logic, p. 28.

his hands, but also through others, including those of the great Primate Stone, and the great Lord Lieutenant Halifax, did this paltry little pension pass before it could reach him to whom it was at last granted. In this Hamilton's callous manœuvring may be discovered. He wanted to show Burke how difficult it was to obtain anything except with the greatest exertion ; what mountains of impediments were to be removed ; and well he might thank his stars for having such a friend as the Chief Secretary.

But Burke had his eyes open, and was beginning to read the unpleasant expression in his friend's smirking countenance. He was by no means comfortable on entering this promised land. He found an unusual care oppressing him ; this pension seemed, before he actually possessed it, to become a heavy burden, and rather to weigh him downwards than to sustain his genius in its lofty flight.

He was still in London, and residing in Queen Anne-street. The state of his mind just before accepting the annuity may be seen from the letter he wrote to Hamilton in March, 1763, and which shows how little real cordiality there was in Hamilton's nature, and how hollow was all this seeming friendship. After a close intimacy of four years Burke finds it necessary to write in studied diplomatic phrases, in order to inform his friend of the only conditions on which he can accept this pension of three hundred pounds a year. He chooses the method of writing, because Hamilton does not hear him speak on the subject without constraint. He hopes, however, that he will read the letter with coolness and attention. Ever since Hamilton had known him he had had a little work lying by him, as a kind of rent-charge on his

thoughts. From this work Hamilton had now offered to relieve him; but having some literary fame, and being obliged to maintain it, though he might defer, the plan of his life would not permit him entirely to suppress this publication. Some short intervals at the leisure season of the year were necessary to consult proper books. Hamilton might fix the time; his business should be first and last in his correspondent's mind; but some discreet liberty was absolutely indispensable. If such a request were thought unreasonable, Hamilton could get Lord Halifax to postpone the pension, that it might afterwards be dropped.*

Nothing could be simpler and fairer than Burke's demand. Had it not been for what subsequently occurred, it might have been thought that the letter was only the expression of a mind too scrupulous and refined, shunning with instinctive delicacy the slightest imputation of ingratitude or breach of faith. As Burke accepted the pension, it must be assumed that Hamilton assented to these conditions.

The book which he alludes to as thus neglected was evidently his work on English History. It had been frequently mentioned in private circles. Horace Walpole alluded to it in a letter to George Montague, when this gentleman was in Ireland with his brother. Montague had supposed that Burke was meditating a History of Ireland, probably because he had then begun to make his researches in Irish history with regard to the Essay on the Penal Laws.†

The year during which the Earl of Halifax was allowed to hold his Irish government was now nearly expired. It was necessary to appoint a successor, and another great

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 46.

† Walpole's Letters, vol. iv.

Nobleman was readily found prepared to undergo the cares of viceroyalty. If Ireland could have been served by high English nobility, the ministers sent them forth in a liberal spirit. Stanhopes, Cavendishes, Russells, Montagues, had, all since Burke went to Trinity College, maintained their Sovereign's dignity in Dublin.* A Percy was to follow on the heels of a Montague. It mattered not whether the new Lord Lieutenant was a genuine Percy, or only a lacquered one; he at least bore the ancient and venerable name; and revived in Dublin all the royal splendour of the race, which had been so renowned for valour and hospitality on the English border. The sudden rise of Sir Hugh Smithson, who, by marriage with a lady in whose veins flowed all the blood of the Seymours and Peroys, and by being made an Earl, and afterwards a Duke, overtopped many proud families, was galling to the old aristocracy.† The Earl was, after all, an accomplished man, with some knowledge of art and literature. He was ready to patronize merit of all kinds. His talents were indeed not great, and his profuse expenditure was seen with envy by those who had less wealth and as much pride. From Burke the Earl of Northumberland, as the friend of poor Emin, at this time beset with difficulties of all kinds in Georgia, had some claim, independent of his office, to respectful attention.

In the September of 1763 the Earl went to Ireland with Hamilton, still as Chief Secretary, and of course with Burke as Hamilton's friend. In the same month of the same year the Secretary secured to himself the lucrative sinecure he had so long coveted of nominally

* Hardy, vol. i. p. 194.

† Walpole's George III., vol. i. p. 418.

superintending the Irish finances, which was held by him for twenty years; and even then, as it was not necessary for his friend Malone to assure us, only resigned for "an equivalent compensation."*

There was little memorable in Lord Northumberland's administration excepting the Earl's display of his own magnificence. But this was indeed so excessive as to be regarded by Walpole as a dangerous precedent for future governors, and by Dr. Johnson, so difficult to be maintained by any other nobleman, as to render his Grace only fit to succeed himself.† An outbreak in the North among the Dissenters, was very perplexing to those who had adopted the convenient theory that the Catholics were the only traitors, and that they were purchased by French gold. But a Lord Lieutenant, who came to Ireland in September, and went home again in the following May, and who had to maintain all the ancient glories of the Percies, by giving processions, dinners, and balls without number, and far surpassing in expense and splendour all that had ever before been witnessed at the Castle, could spare no time to consider the condition of the country. The social state of Ireland was of little importance indeed to such an illustrious Lord Lieutenant.

His Chief Secretary, too, gave him much trouble. They could not agree, nor did they conceal their want of harmony from the world. The bad terms they were upon became notorious. In England it was reported that Hamilton had set himself at the head of the opposition, to annoy the Viceroy. He no longer took that able and active part which he had performed during Lord Hali-

* Preface to Parliamentary Logic, p. 28.

† Walpole's George III., vol. i. p. 417. Boswell.

fax's administration. His oratory shone forth no more with unrivalled brilliancy. His abilities were now displayed in another sphere. He had a quarrel with Lord Newton about Lady Newton; and the Secretary for once in his life came off with flying colours.* On the return of the Lord Lieutenant to England, Hamilton was dismissed; Burke of course shared in his patron's downfall; and thus ended Edmund's semi-official connection with Ireland.

With Burke came over from Ireland a young and friendless painter, who had been recommended to him by an old friend. Born in the city of Cork, and growing up among rude sailors, genius had inspired a poor boy with the ambition to delineate the beauties of nature, which were not hidden even from one clothed in rags, serving in the cabin of a merchant vessel, and looking at the setting sun, and the spangled firmament, from the rough forecastle and the giddy topmast. Amid almost inconceivable hardships, he had learnt himself the rudiments of the painter's art. As he grew older, and read historical works, he began to image in his mind lofty subjects for portraying on canvas, such as even artists highly trained, accomplished in all the mechanism of the profession, and familiar with the works of the greatest masters, have never presumed to execute. One of these he finished, and carried to Dublin, with an introductory letter to Burke. Crude as the workmanship seemed, the idea was sublime, and the promise undeniable. To examine for himself the attainments of the young painter, Burke talked to him on art and artists, and delivered himself of some critical opinions, which the youth regarded as untenable, and quoted in opposition

* Walpole's Letters, vol. iv. p. 327.

to them Burke's own anonymous work, the Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful. Burke professed to treat the book as a superficial essay and a poor authority. At no time inclined to conceal his sentiments, and always ready for controversy, the artist became warm in defence of the unknown author. Burke, after keeping up the joke for some time, at length closed the dispute by confessing that he had written the book. The excited painter flung his arms round his neck, shedding tears of delight. He is even said to have shown Burke the whole work copied in manuscript, as evidence of his sincere esteem for a volume which his pecuniary circumstances had not permitted him to purchase. This story is indeed almost too good to be true, though it appears to have been afterwards told by the painter himself. James Barry was to Burke another Joseph Emin. Feeling it his duty, although such duties are seldom thought of by the inheritors of broad acres and the possessors of millions in Government securities, to protect unfriended genius in every form in which it might claim his attention, Burke brought Barry with him to England, that he might more advantageously pursue his professional education, have the advice of Reynolds, and be introduced to the notice of the great.*

What Burke was doing for Barry there was as yet none to do for him. At Northumberland House, in the Strand, there were great rejoicings as soon as its lord returned. The liveries of the servants were sumptuous, the illumination of the gardens splendid, the chaplains wore scarfs in the Irish manner, and all the great world of fashion congregated in the Lord Lieutenant's mansion.†

* Barry's Life and Works, vol. i. pp. 10, 14.

† Walpole's Letters, vol. iv. p. 427.

Burke was not among the guests. What had he, or such as he, to do there? Even the good-natured daughter of the Seymours and the Percies, with her lace and diamonds, her pipers and drummers, her plump person and blunt manners, could never dream of honouring herself and her lord by showing kindness and respect to Hamilton's friend.

He had once more settled down in Queen Anne-street. He had not been there long when he appears to have had the pleasure of receiving some visits from his old schoolmaster, Abraham Shackleton, who had found his way to London, and while he was there, occasionally left his Quaker friends in Gracechurch-street, to see Burke and his family at the west end of the town. He was cordially welcomed. But it does not seem as though there was much intercourse between Burke and the Shackletons while he stayed in Dublin. Richard Shackleton had his school to attend to at Ballitore. Burke had the business of Hamilton occupying all his thoughts and time.

The same letter which mentions old Abraham's visit, also records that Richard Burke was on the point of setting out for Grenada. He had obtained an appointment in the Customs of that Island, and Edmund, as his brother goes forth to battle with a bad climate and in a bad season, moralizes finely on his journey. His favourite quotation, *Turpe senex miles*, which he applied to himself many years afterwards, when he was thinking of retirement from active political life,* is here met with as an encouragement to labour and enterprise in youth, that repose might be fairly earned in old-age. "Poverty and age," says he beautifully, "sort ill together; and a course of struggling is miserable indeed

* Works, vol. iv. p. 147.

when strength is decayed, and hope gone." With such sentiments he himself struggles on, bearing Hamilton's coldness, and attentively watching the great political game.

Though the doors of the House of Commons were as yet closed to him, the Evening Assembly, which many years later was christened, at Garrick's funeral, the Literary Club, but which is better known as The Club, was being established. The date of its foundation is uncertain. Some writers have thought that it was formed in the spring of 1763, others in the winter of that year, and others in the summer of 1764. On this subject Boswell is the best authority. He says that it was not until Johnson returned from a visit to the Langtons in Lincolnshire, that the Club was founded.* This visit was made early in 1764. Johnson did not return to London before February, and it therefore could not have been until the spring was somewhat advanced, that the nine gentlemen who first composed this assembly began to meet together once a week at the Turk's Head in Gerrard-street. This date corresponds with what we know of Burke's proceedings. In the winter of 1763 he was in Ireland, and it was not until the Earl of Northumberland returned to England in the May of 1764 that Hamilton was dismissed from his secretaryship, and that he and his friend could have returned to London. It could not therefore have been before the May of this year that the Club, with Burke for one of its most prominent members, came fairly into existence. Boswell's account is thus borne out by what we can learn of Burke's private history.

Sir Joshua Reynolds is allowed on all sides to have

* *Life of Johnson.*

been the Romulus of the society. We cannot fix the exact date of the commencement of that friendship which so closely united Edmund and Sir Joshua. We know, however, that it commenced very early, and that it continued, as Burke himself said, without a moment of coldness, of peevishness, of jealousy, or of jar, to the day of their final separation. Between Johnson and Reynolds there were occasionally moments of misunderstanding. The doctor's rudeness was not always pardonable to the refined and polished Sir Joshua. Johnson seems now and then to have felt, as was indeed true, that Burke had more of the painter's sympathies than himself; and, though Boswell of course could not understand it, it is evident that among the original members of the Club Burke had at least as many admirers as his great antagonist. There was, towering above even Burke, in all the pride of six feet six, the gentle and humane Langton, who did not hesitate to acknowledge his pleasure in hearing Edmund in preference to the old dictator. There was Langton's college friend, Beauclerk, sneering and supercilious, and with his air of the great world, impressing even Johnson with a sense of his fashionable superiority. There was Oliver Goldsmith, after long struggling with his poverty, imprudence, and Mr. Griffiths, at last seeing the first bright streaks of a better day dawning upon his sweet artistic soul, and also heartily admiring, even beyond Johnson's colloquial powers, the subtlety and fluency of his fellow-student at Trinity College. And there was pompous Mr. John Hawkins, formerly an attorney, now a Middlesex magistrate, and a rigid supporter of all social decorum.

He could see nothing in Goldsmith to respect, and his memory has been very unenviably associated with

that of Burke. Edmund was, to the retired attorney and purse-proud magistrate, an Irish adventurer, an individual of altogether questionable character, a man who had to talk his way in the world. While the rest of the members, including Johnson himself, listened with delight to Burke's eloquent periods, as his mind seemed to flow out in a perpetual stream, Mr. Hawkins looked sour and gloomy, and doubted whether to applaud and encourage such a person was not altogether inconsistent with the wise arrangements of his adored "civil polity." Mr. Hawkins went home from the Club grumbling at the late hours, the respect shown to Burke, and the little reverence for a great magistrate. One evening he determined to put Burke down in the style of the Bench; his rudeness so disgusted the rest of the Club, that the company, when he next made his appearance, testified their displeasure; and Mr. Hawkins withdrew himself for ever, saying, in magisterial phrase, that the late hours disturbed his domestic economy. But this was not the true reason. Though Mr. Hawkins might show some deference to Johnson, whom he had known for many years, and who had grown to be something like an established institution, he could not tolerate a younger man who talked so copiously and seemed so eager to push himself forward. Burke had in his upward progress to encounter men as bad, if not worse, than this surly Middlesex magistrate, who, as Johnson was dying, attempted to steal a manuscript volume. Sir John Hawkins was the type of a class, and with this slight notice may disappear from these pages.

It is pleasing to find Dr. Nugent introduced by his son-in-law to the Club, and enjoying, in his quiet old-age, the intellectual gladiatorialship of Burke and John-

son. Many a long account must he have given to his daughter Jane, on going home, of those discussions, in which her husband shone so brilliantly. The curtain was at last rising. Burke's powers were now being displayed in a splendid though select theatre; and he was becoming fully known. The darkest hour of the night is that nearest the dawn. While Burke was yearning for freedom, and his intimacy with Hamilton seemed to do him so little good, the fortunate moment of his emancipation was approaching. Much as the ex-Chief Secretary affected to like literary society, and much as he professed a friendship for Dr. Johnson, it is a significant fact that Hamilton was not only not one of the original members of the Club, but that he was also never chosen even when it had become a society for all who were eminent in literature and politics.

At the Turk's Head Burke was now a most distinguished actor. There was another, and even to him more important scene, in which a great and eventful drama was then being performed, but of which he could only be a close observer, without giving utterance to what he thought. It had long been his custom, while in London, to frequent the gallery of the House of Commons. There he sat, disregarded as a mere stranger, and was probably looked upon by the officials as an intruder, who had better have been minding his own business. He pined for the time when he could take his place on the green benches, and rouse honourable members from their ignorance and apathy.

They knew not what they were about. Grenville had pledged himself to introduce a Stamp Act in the Session of 1765; and to the collective wisdom of Court, Ministers, and Parliament, nothing seemed easier than to recompense

England for the debt she had incurred during the last triumphant war by raising a revenue in America. By all the rules of logic, such a scheme could be most satisfactorily defended. It was from no wish to establish arbitrary power, or to dispose of people's money without their consent, that Grenville resolutely enforced his scheme of American taxation. To his mind it seemed that such a course of policy was recommended by the purest Whig principles. It limited the authority of the Sovereign. The right to tax America by the British Parliament being once clearly determined, it seemed to Grenville that the power of the Privy Council over colonial affairs would be done away with, and that the supremacy of Parliament throughout the British dominions would be universally acknowledged. Grenville, with his jealousy of George III., imagined that instead of forging shackles for his fellow-subjects in America, he was in reality tying the hands of his Royal master.* The King, from his point of view, directly opposite to that of the Minister, was equally eager to see the right enforced; and thus the two men, with such different intentions, heartily adopted the same measures, and hurried blindly to their ruin. Hating each other, and attempting to outwit each other, from such contrary sources their dominant passions met together, flowed impetuously down the same channel, and dashed furiously against every obstacle which threatened to stop their reckless course.

The feelings of the colonists were wantonly disregarded. Externally, their West Indian trade, which a wise government would have fostered, was swept from the sea under the stern hostility of captains of men-of-war turned into

* See some remarkable observations of Grenville in the Cavendish Reports, vol. i. p. 496.

excisemen. Internally, some of the provinces were suffering from a fierce inroad of the Red-men as bloody and as destructive as had ever been remembered by the elders in the wilderness. The marks of devastation were still in the forest. The trail of the savage might still be traced. His horrible war-whoop was still ringing in the ears. The tomahawk had done its work on man, woman, and child; and the husbandmen on the borders of Maryland and Virginia had long reason to remember the last blow which Pontiac, the Indian Arminius, struck for the freedom of his race and the hunting-grounds of his fathers.

Of one accustomed, as Burke had now been for seven years, to survey with a considerate eye the state of the whole British Empire, and to compose from such scattered and diversified materials the history of each successive year, none of the circumstances so necessary to form a just idea of the inexpediency of the Stamp Act could escape the observation. He afterwards affirmed that while he sat in Parliament, and before he sat in Parliament, he never had had but one opinion of this policy. He might well, therefore, use particular diligence in securing his admission to the gallery on the 12th of February, 1765, when Grenville moved his fifty-five financial resolutions, among which the Stamp Act in detail was comprised. He might well listen with some degree of impatience to the Minister's stereotyped arguments about the right of the Colonies to protection, and of Parliament to revenue, the expenses of the last war, the advantages of the peace to the Americans, the heavy national debt of one hundred and forty millions, of which seventy millions had been added during the late contest, the blessings which the British Government diffused from its central

heart to its most remote dependencies, the unlimited and illimitable power of the Imperial Legislature.* He might well sympathize with Alderman Beckford, the West Indian planter, the idolater of Pitt, and one of the Members for the City, as he rose, and, in that peculiar dialect which bewrayed his origin, declared bluntly that the scheme of raising a revenue from America would never succeed. He might well augur evil from the general assent with which Grenville's propositions were received, and from the general neglect of the honest Alderman's prophecy.

The debate languished. This was, according to Horace Walpole, who sat on the opposition benches, a slight day. A gentle passage of arms between Charles Townshend and that Colonel Barré, who had now attained a recognized position as an orator in the House, alone disturbed the cloudless serenity of the evening, which was the harbinger of so much storm, and trouble, and confusion. Barré's words, as with uplifted arm and animated features they flowed from his lips in an unbroken torrent of declamation, must have awakened a kindred response in the bosom of the silent and earnest stranger in the gallery. As he sat among the agents for the Colonies, he might observe how eagerly they took notes of Barré's speech, which was transmitted by the next mail across the Atlantic, printed in every village newspaper in the Colonies, translated into French, and read even in Canada. When the House at last adjourned, after the debate had again relapsed into the frigid dulness with which it was begun, and as the carriages of honourable and right honourable senators dashed past him as he was wending his solitary way to his happy home through

* American Correspondence, quoted in Bancroft.

the dark streets of a slumbering metropolis, his lips must have become compressed, and his brow saddened with thought and care. Thousand of years may pass away, and the remembrance of that night, with its senatorial lassitude and folly, not be effaced.

The Stamp Act, whatever might be its proposers' intentions, gave birth to American independence. About the same time, while Hamilton was endeavouring to secure Burke's services for ever to himself, and make his life one continued thraldom, his tyrannical measures to effect this object, as imprudent in private life as Grenville's Stamp Act was in public affairs, were the means of freeing Burke's genius from a servitude which daily became more intolerable. The poor pension of three hundred a year had no sooner been obtained by Hamilton, among others, for his friend, than the presumption of the patron seems to have increased ; and he began to look upon Burke as a portion of his household goods. Edmund too had lived an active life during the last five years. He had moved about for some time behind the scenes of Government. He had seen much of many eminent politicians. He had had the opportunity of comparing his abilities with those of more successful individuals. His acquaintance with official people had gradually extended ; and it is not wonderful that as year after year passed away, he became somewhat impatient on being left so far behind by many of his contemporaries. He had assisted Hamilton in securing to himself a large fortune, while his own remained stationary at a very humble altitude in the worldly barometer. Hamilton still continued to make promises ; but those promises remained unfulfilled. Burke had for some time been determined to preserve his freedom at any price, and early

in 1764, while they were in Dublin, he had taken care to inform Hamilton of his resolution.*

For a time, however, they went on together as usual. In London, Burke's reputation, what with his eminence among literary men from his colloquial displays, his editorship of the Annual Register, and his varied political knowledge, embracing as it did an intimate acquaintance with commercial details, and the sound principles of trade, had become very great. His official experience in Irish affairs, however trivial it might seem to a lofty political aspirant, was also of some importance. Other people began to discern the value of Mr. Hamilton's acquisition; and Mr. Hamilton began to feel the stings of jealousy. Conscious of how imperfectly he had performed his obligations, he feared that a sagacious official might give Burke something really worth his acceptance in order to obtain his services, and that he might lose the genius he had appropriated to himself for six years, and now, as a matter of prescriptive right, considered as his own peculiar possession.

To secure Burke for ever, Hamilton offered him a certain income out of his private fortune, on the condition that he should belong to him, and him alone. He was to remain with Hamilton, in a sort of domestic situation, legally bound to devote himself exclusively to the interests of his master, without the power of freeing himself from his engagement, or of accepting any other advantages which circumstances might offer. Burke was ready to continue his services as before, but declined to agree to this proposition. Some stormy interviews succeeded, in which Hamilton reminded Burke of the pension he had procured for him, taxed him with ingratitude, and

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 60.

accused him of deserting his friend on account of his want of success in politics. Burke warmly denied these imputations. Hamilton was insolent and imperious. They ceased to see each other. When Burke called at Hamilton's door he was not admitted ; and to his earnest entreaties for another meeting, Hamilton, repeating with acrimonious politeness his insulting accusations, declined all conversation and correspondence. Burke, in gentle phrases, but in a firm and decided manner, refused to accede to his patron's terms ; but he still clung to the hope of a reconciliation. After so long a connection, he could not make up his mind to an abrupt dissolution of all friendship ; and expressed himself in a manner which would have satisfied any one but a conceited and arrogant coxcomb, who thought that his money could purchase anything from another, and excuse anything in himself. Hamilton had evidently so high an opinion of his own position, and so low a one of that of his old associate, that it seemed to him he could be lofty and imperious with impunity, that Burke must at last submit to his tyranny, and surrender at discretion.

Before the breach had become irreparable, Lord Charlemont had been chosen a mediator. As he introduced Burke to Hamilton, he was naturally the fittest person for such an office ; but the serious nature of the disagreement appears never to have been understood by him ; for he afterwards stated that the cause of dissension was somewhat whimsical.* But what might seem whimsical to a wealthy Peer was a very different thing to a struggling man of genius. It was not whimsical to refuse being a slave for three hundred pounds a year. Hamilton's subsequent conduct proved that Burke's indigna-

* Hardy, vol. i. p. 120.

tion at such servile proposals was thoroughly justifiable, and that his refusal, under any circumstances, to consent to such terms, was not the offspring of mere caprice, but a wise and righteous determination.

Hamilton little knew the character of the man he was then presuming to trample down. He little knew what a flame of indignation was burning under Burke's respectful demeanour. We can judge of what a restraint he must have put upon his feelings when he entreated to be admitted into Hamilton's presence, and how his spirit must have rebelled beneath the yoke of this abasement. What is so obvious now, however, to those who only, after the lapse of nearly a century, read their correspondence, was quite invisible to Hamilton, who had for many years been in daily intercourse with Burke. He did not know how proud was that humility of which he would have taken advantage, and made the mere blind vassal of his selfish purposes. Calculating on the thin golden chain he fancied he had placed round the neck of his faithful friend and assistant, he struck a coward's blow, expecting that his slave would fall and beg for mercy at his feet. To his amazement the serf rose up, in all the pride of insulted manhood and moral dignity, and, as he towered above his oppressor, flung the yellow shackle in his face; thus preferring, to the luxuries of a menial dependence, his freedom and the unpensioned desert. Yes! the slave was free. The Ariel had found within himself the power to effect his own emancipation; and, feeling superior to the sordid elements he had escaped from, could now soar proudly to the highest heaven.

On Tuesday, the 26th of February, the day before the Stamp Act was actually passed by the House of Com-

mons, we find, in Burke's Correspondence, that he was on the point of resigning his pension to a friend of Hamilton's, Mr. Jephson, who acquired some literary reputation as a dramatist, and who was also acquainted with Burke. Edmund had not thought fit merely to make a feint of resigning this pecuniary claim. Hamilton was informed by his friends that unless he would choose a person to receive it, Burke intended resigning it into the hands of the Treasury. Some delay occurred—from what cause it is now impossible to discover. Finding Burke determined thus to renounce all connection with him for ever, to carry about with him not the slightest memorial of their intimacy, and to shake the dust of Hamilton's residence from off his feet, this petty tyrant may have found out, as other tyrants sometimes do, that he had made a false move, and perhaps have been desirous of retracing it. But the compliant Edmund was now solid adamant. He was resolved that not only should the manacle be removed, but that the mark of it should be obliterated for ever. After Hamilton had nominated Jephson to receive the pension, Burke on reflection thought that as this gentleman was the common friend of them both, it might be supposed an assignment in trust for himself. He requested Hamilton to make another choice. On the 10th of April, 1765, Burke executed the assignment of the pension to Mr. Hamilton's own solicitor, and this was of course making it over to Hamilton. Thus did this generous patron appropriate to his own use the paltry recompense which Burke had obtained for six years' sincere devotion and unremitting attention. To render the history of Hamilton's magnanimous generosity complete, Burke had soon reason to believe that, of all who were instrumental in procuring the pension,

Hamilton could put in a just claim to the least share of merit.*

From a document quoted by Mr. Prior, it would seem as though Burke had only enjoyed his salary for one year, and that he resigned it on the 10th of April, 1764.† This, however, is completely contradicted by the dates of the correspondence with Hamilton, and by every fact in Burke's history. There is plainly a mistake of one year in the memorandum from the Vice-Treasurer's Office in Dublin ; and the assertion grounded upon it, in opposition to the express testimony of Burke's private letters, of his having held the pension for twelve months only, is a manifest error.‡ Burke's Correspondence on the subject, as soon as the reports of the quarrel and its consequences had been spread abroad, places the date of the occurrence, which did not indeed require this confirmation, beyond all dispute.

Defeated in his dastardly object, Hamilton's conduct, after this violent rupture, was, if possible, still more dastardly. He attempted to blacken the character of the man whom he could not enslave. After showing himself a mean persecutor, he became a vile calumniator. His deceit could not mislead, his frowns terrify, nor his power conquer ; a foul blow from behind was to be struck, and by slander Burke was to be destroyed. Hamilton's agents everywhere reported that Burke had acted dishonestly, that he had received the wages for a certain service, and had then refused to perform its duties; and that he was little better than a scoundrel. There were such whispers, hints, ominous shakes of the head, and so many flying rumours, all occasioned by Hamilton's ma-

* Burke's Works, vol. i. p. 35.

† Prior, p. 74. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

lignant ingenuity, and the parasitical industry of his officious emissaries, that Burke had some reason to apprehend not only the being deprived of all compensation for six years of assiduous labour, but all chance of improving his fortune in the future. In London indeed his presence might in some measure be an effective antidote to this insidious poison. But in Ireland, where Hamilton and he had been so long engaged, and where they had so many common friends, the consequences of these vile calumnies might be more mischievous. The purest of human beings could not but feel with some degree of sensibility the subtle working of such slander. Burke therefore wrote long letters to Hely Hutchinson, Monk Mason, and Henry Flood, and entered into a full detail of the treatment he had suffered from the late Secretary in whose service they had seen him labour with so much assiduity and fidelity. His statements cannot be questioned. They have been confirmed wherever confirmation was possible. Two of these letters have only recently seen the light; but they have thrown a dark shadow over Hamilton's name. They make him at once infamous and contemptible.

Burke had at least the luxury of a proud revenge. At the moment when he sacrificed his pension on the altar of departed friendship, such an act was true heroism. His means of support were no greater than they had been before he knew Hamilton. The hundred pounds a year from the Annual Register, and Dr. Nugent's occasional assistance, appear to have been all on which he could depend. He was now thirty-six or seven years of age, with a family, and no settled income. Under these circumstances his resignation of the pension which he had fairly earned, and not a farthing of which had come from

Hamilton's own purse, may to some persons seem over scrupulous. He is entitled, however, to all the glory of such disinterested magnanimity; and when there are any other portions of his life, in which his pecuniary affairs seem not clearly explained, the knowledge that such was his conduct in this hard season of trial may assist the mind in forming an intelligible judgment. His first gleam of good fortune must have burst forth almost immediately after the final abandonment of the annuity, though two months after he had informed Hamilton that such was his intention, and requested him to appoint a recipient. In the April of that year his elder brother, Garret, died unmarried, and, as his heir, Burke unexpectedly found himself in the possession of property worth about six thousand pounds. By some means or other, which will afterwards be considered, the farm of Clohir had come into Garret's hands, and to Edmund, as the next heir, the inheritance descended. Providence had not deserted the brave. In the same month in which he had thus voluntary relinquished an annual income of three hundred pounds a year from a sense of high honour when he found it intended to be a badge of servitude, he became possessed of some property to the same amount, to which no humiliating conditions could be attached.

This acquisition was, after such a long wrestle with fortune, the sign of a better time. The dark night was at last passing away, the clouds of ignorance and malice were breaking, and on the horizon were the first faint streaks of a dawning glory which was to illuminate the whole world with its resplendent beams. And Hamilton, as a disagreeable spectre of the darkness, vanishes from out of the path of this brilliant genius, as it nobly ascends in its benignant career, which was like that of the

God of day himself, the blessed harbinger of light, gladness, and comfort to the oppressed and the suffering among all nations, races, religions, and climes.

As the slave in the triumphal procession, Hamilton through a long series of years was fated to behold in ignominious silence the illustrious progress of the man whom he had attempted to degrade and to dishonour. He saw him become the confidential Secretary of a high-minded Statesman. He saw him enter the House of Commons but a few months from the time when they separated for ever. He saw him at his first outset achieve such an oratorical success as equalled even his own memorable first and only great display. He saw him publicly commended by Mr. Pitt. He saw him rise with unexampled rapidity to the first rank among the Parliamentary speakers of his time. He saw him advance from victory to victory, until Europe and America were filled with his fame; and he became universally acknowledged to be the most richly gifted of politicians, the most eloquent of writers, and the most imaginative and comprehensive of orators that the world had ever seen. All this, and more than this, Hamilton had silently to see. And in their common old-age, when Burke was full of honours and renown, and when Hamilton was himself neglected and forgotten, he was to make humble advances towards a reconciliation, and to suffer the bitterest of all mortifications, that of having his overtures to the great political philosopher whom he had so deeply wronged, politely rejected, and internally despised.

We must now follow Burke to that great scene on which he had hitherto been but an attentive spectator, or at most the skilful prompter of others. From its ob-

scure source, we have attempted to follow the course of his existence, round hills and down valleys, but every moment being in danger of losing the track in the thick entanglements of brushwood, with which it has everywhere been beset. The stream of his exertions now unites itself with the mighty current of public affairs; and the great difficulty, in such a rushing confluence of so many human agencies, will be to separate his individual efforts from the great and ever-expanding torrent, as it rolls down with majestic impetuosity to the eternal sea.

CHAPTER X.

1765.

WITH THE ROCKINGHAM WHIGS.

IN the consideration of his subsequent consistency, Burke's political opinions at the time of his separation from Hamilton are of much importance. In his letter to Flood on this subject he depicts Pitt as lying on his back at Hayes, intoxicated by pride and talking fustian. The dislike of Pitt, which Burke's later writings display, was not then the effect of mere party antagonism, but the result of his just insight into the great patriot's character, as he had estimated it before he had cast in his fortunes with Lord Rockingham. Had Pitt known what eyes were then watching him, he might have condescended to abate somewhat of his pride and pomposity. Burke, when in former days a shout of reproach had burst forth against the great War Minister on his acceptance of a pension for himself and a peerage for his wife, had manfully defended him, in the Annual Register, against the unthinking multitude. Now the millions were enthusiastically worshiping him again in a spirit of fanatical idolatry ; but, unawed by the clouds in which the political luminary had though fit to veil his splendour, Burke saw through all this mysterious magnificence, and could discern some dark spots in the very centre of the effulgent holy of holies.

The struggle between pride and patriotism in Pitt's mind was long and dubious. Everything that a subject could ask, everything that a monarch could grant, was promised by George III., if only the great Commoner would release him from the embarrassing position in which he was involved by his own obstinacy, the ignorance of his mother, and the folly of his flatterers. All was in vain. The King's cries of distress, the Duke of Cumberland's entreaties, the distracted state of the country, the riots in the metropolis, were not sufficient to induce Pitt to throw mere domestic considerations to the winds, and, by shutting his ears to the hints of Lord Temple's distempered schemes, once more become the saviour of the nation, over which more serious and lengthened calamities were impending, even during a season of nominal peace, than at the commencement of the war which had made him so great and his beloved England so glorious. He was content to be regarded as an oracle, as a god who might at any moment descend from his exalted sphere and free the machinery of the State from its complicated disorders; but he was only too happy, for the time, amid the jarring dissonance of the political world, to see his power more acknowledged both by friends and enemies on account of his proud abstinence. He might for the moment exult in the perplexity of kings, courtiers, ministers, and oppositions. The image of the great patriot, like the statue of Brutus in the funeral procession, was only more present to the minds of men by reason of his absence from the vulgar gaze.

The King's misfortunes increased. On the 12th of June a memorial was read to him by the Duke of Bedford, such as few subjects have ever thought of making to their sovereign, and no monarch could patiently endure.

Pitt was again sent for, and again, owing to his brother-in-law's machinations, declined office. Finding Pitt still impracticable, George III. eagerly embraced the slightest promise of relief from his present thraldom, and was eager to welcome the great Whig nobleman, whom three years before he had driven with scorn and insult from St. James's. Even Burke's fortune depended greatly on the King's resolution, though at the time he was as unconscious of it as the Sovereign or his future Ministers.

On the 30th of June, 1765, the arms of many great aristocratic politicians might be seen on the carriages proceeding in the direction of the lordly cedars at Claremont. There was again a crisis. The Duke of Newcastle was in a state of great excitement; and, on looking round the great assembly, experienced the same restless ambition which for more than fifty years had been his ruling passion. Age, infirmity, defeat, persecution, sorrow, obloquy, were at once forgotten, at the enchanting prospect of once more returning to Court; and the old man seemed as happy at the thought of again dispensing the patronage, and receiving the homage of suitors, as though he were still a young and enthusiastic statesman, who had never experienced the deceit of kings, the ingratitude of courtiers, and the impotence of power. The men who, for the most part, surrounded him on this day were mere children to himself; they were of one generation, while he was of another; yet he was the busiest, most eager, the most anxious of them all. The first question for their decision was, whether as a party, and without Mr. Pitt's assistance, the Whigs should accept the responsibilities of office? There were young men, who, even in the most sanguine season of their lives, replied in the negative; but the old Duke, who was tottering on the

verge of the grave, and had had such a long and almost exclusive enjoyment of office, could brook neither delay nor hesitation ; and he exerted all his authority to induce those who might have been his grandsons to embark with him once more in the delusive pleasure of forming and carrying on a Government.

The Duke's influence prevailed. They were to form a Ministry, though his Grace himself was not to be the First Lord of the Treasury, but only to hold the Privy Seal, and enjoy, in addition, the distribution of church patronage, which was to him more pleasant to bestow than it could be to any reverend gentleman to receive. The individual selected to be Prime Minister was a nobleman, comparatively young in years, and who had then given few indications of his fitness for so high an office, but who was to be the recognized leader of the Whig party from this time until his death, and to be inseparably associated with Burke's genius as long as the English language and the English history should exist.

His name was Charles Watson Wentworth, second Marquis of Rockingham. At the accession of George III. he held the post of Lord of the Bedchamber, which he had resigned on the dismissal of his friend the Duke of Devonshire, in 1762, and he had ever since been in steady though unobtrusive opposition to the Court. Born to an ample fortune, but with a very delicate constitution, he had neither the powerful motives for exertion, nor the strength of body indispensable to those who, from humble circumstances, would push their way to the highest honours of the State. He was habitually indolent, and constitutionally nervous. Conscious of his good intentions, and sincerely desirous of promoting the public good, he stood erect in the presence of his Sovereign, and with

respect, but also with firmness, could express his disapprobation of measures which he believed to be prejudicial to the Empire. In council, in his letters, and amongst his private friends, he displayed the same integrity, the same frankness, the same courage. But his voice faltered when he was called upon to address the House of Lords, and even on great occasions, when his own Government was attacked, he was frequently mute. He had travelled. He had made many attached friends. But in the nation which he was for a time to govern, and whose best interests he was for so many years to promote with so much wisdom and foresight, he was but little known ; and where his name was familiar, his character was but little understood. His English estates being situated in that northern county where horses are more particularly bred and trained, he had been one of the leading patrons of the Turf, and was by the sedate portion of the community considered, on being chosen head of the Government, to be under the reproach of jockeyship.* No statesman, at his outset in political life, promised so little as Lord Rockingham ; while, according to his opportunities, no statesman ever performed so much.

The resplendent halo which Burke's genius has thrown around this nobleman, may appear to invest him with a charm beyond his merits. But when all allowance is made for the fidelity, gratitude, and love, which were blended by the devoted adherent in that seductive portraiture, no Minister can ever occupy a niche in English history with a purer reputation than Lord Rockingham. Of all the statesmen that ever had anything to do with English political parties, he, without exception, had most

* Annual Register, 1765.

perfectly the qualification so necessary in a leader, of managing the different dispositions of men. His tact in inducing his friends to sink their differences, and to act cordially together, was altogether unexampled. The most virtuous and respectable characters of that time suffered themselves to be guided almost implicitly by a nobleman not their superior in intellect, but in temper; and such confidence had they in the justice of his views and the purity of his motives, that they regarded him with absolute veneration. A just moderation, irreproachable integrity, unwavering attachment to his principles, fidelity to his friends, modesty, ingenuousness, simplicity, such were the virtues, such were the arts which Lord Rockingham, in the age of the Temples, Sandwiches, Weymouths, Melcombes, and Jenkinsons, brought into the public service. Such virtues in great Ministers are not so plentiful in any age, that we can afford to slight them for brilliant declamation and unblushing latitudinarianism. Such virtues are the salt of political life, without which no healthy popular constitution can exist. They contributed greatly to save the nation at a time when mere genius, without Lord Rockingham's high principles, might have sunk it in irretrievable ruin. His placid and refined features, with the gentle but steady gaze of the eyes, were admirably expressive of what Junius most truly and happily characterized as Lord Rockingham's mild but determined integrity; and, as they remain to us delineated by the painter's skill, seem invested with a mythical and yet real beauty.

The lofty qualities of the new Prime Minister were not discernible by the vulgar at first sight. To display them in their noble proportions, a long and almost hope-

less struggle with the folly and obstinacy of the Court was required. The task he had undertaken in 1765 was no easy one, for the most gifted of statesmen, at the head of a commanding majority, and possessing the full confidence and support of the Sovereign. In such a Minister as Lord Rockingham, and at such a time, it was regarded by acute observers as positively ridiculous.* The men who agreed to share his labours were, for the most part, like himself, inexperienced in affairs, and until they accepted their appointments were scarcely regarded as serious competitors for office.

General Conway and the Duke of Grafton were the two Secretaries of State, and had given as little promise as the Prime Minister, of political ability.

Conway was by profession and inclination a soldier. Indignation had made him a statesman. His bravery had been remarkable on several fields of battle. His sole experience of public business had been gained in Ireland, where he had formerly been Chief Secretary to the Duke of Devonshire, when Marquis of Hartington. He was thus intimately connected with the Cavendishes, and like them had fallen under the displeasure of the Court. For a vote that he had given against general warrants, he was deprived of his regiment; and this wanton outrage inflicted with tyrannical insolence, incited him to come forward with warmth as the opponent of Grenville. He was observed to speak then with the blood mounting into his cheeks; and this personal wrong kindled within him a fierce enthusiasm, which a mere public grievance never could have done. For Henry Conway's heart was cold. He was somewhat too mindful of his own interests, and somewhat too forgetful of those of

* Hamilton to Calcraft; Chatham Correspondence.

his dearest friends, who had hazarded their fortunes in his cause. He marched with equanimity up to the cannon's mouth. He trembled at the slightest gust of public opinion, and was borne before it, in all its veerings, as the autumn leaves before the wind. In politics, without courage, without decision, without a principle, he was nervously anxious to be in the right, was not seldom in the wrong, and was always the tool of other men. As he had been one of the victims of the late Ministry, and, heated by his injuries, had displayed considerable fluency and spirit in his conflicts with Grenville, he was chosen to lead the House of Commons.*

Lord Rockingham's want of oratorical ability rendering him unfit to be the principal Ministerial speaker in the House of Lords, the whole weight of debate was there thrown on the Duke of Grafton. He had some of Conway's virtues, and many of his failings. As politicians, they had the same weakness and indecision. Instead of being fit for leaders, they both required guides at every step of their political journey, and when left to themselves, stumbled helplessly from quagmire to pitfall. The Duke had all Conway's shyness, reserve, and coldness, with more ambition, more interestedness, and more calculation. He had perhaps less political principle, and was decidedly less amiable. There was in this nobleman a stern, melancholy imperiousness, which was in keeping with his swarthy features, that reminded all men of his royal origin. His manners were graceful, there was much dignity in his address; but those who re-

* Even Walpole cannot make Conway appear otherwise than as one of the most insignificant of politicians. See the *Memoirs and Correspondence, passim.*

spected, saw little to love in his character; and children, even in his old-age, fled at his approach.* With many misgivings, and with wistful eyes fixed on Burton Pynsent, whither Pitt had retired, he accepted office under Lord Rockingham; and as one of the best speakers among the aristocracy, he was heartily welcomed by an Administration singularly deficient in oratorical power.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was not chosen from the great merchants of the City, but from the ranks of the country gentlemen. Like Conway, Grafton, and Rockingham, William Dowdeswell had never before filled any important political office. He had, however, acquired business habits, had paid much attention to matters of finance, had gained the ear of the House for his plain and meritorious attentions to economical details, and might be considered in some respects as an agricultural Joseph Hume. He always spoke facts. Chatham afterwards called him, from the plainness of his tone and unpretending manner, the dull Dowdeswell; but this was not until the haughty patriot had shown himself so sensible of Dowdeswell's merits, as to use every artifice of flattery and entreaty to detach him from Lord Rockingham, and had found this upright country gentleman's fidelity to his political leader not to be shaken. Dowdeswell's life was industriously spent in administering justice as a municipal magistrate in Worcestershire, and in advocating generous and humane principles of government as a Knight of the Shire in Parliament.† England may well be proud of such men, and rejoice that their children walk in the footsteps of

* See the personal impression he left on the present Earl of Albemarle. *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham, and his Contemporaries*, vol. i. p. 223.

† Burke's Epitaph; *Cavendish Reports*, vol. i. p. 575.

such fathers. May their race be perpetual ! May it increase and multiply from generation to generation ! The safest guardians of the national honour, they, with hearts as true as those of the native oaks which shade so many of their ancestral habitations, are at once the pride and defence of this English land.

Another country gentleman, who, though not enrolled in the list of the new Ministry, ever continued a warm friend of Lord Rockingham, and an essential element in the strength of the party, was Sir George Savile. Devoted to public business, and the champion of popular rights, every hour of Savile's laborious life was given to his country. His philanthropy was equal to that of Wilberforce. He struggled to redeem the nation from the disgrace of the penal laws. To the Protestant Dissenter and to the Roman Catholics he distributed, with impartial hand, the results of his enlarged beneficence. Of the imprudent designs of the Court he was the steady opponent. A radiant smile was observed to light up his jaded features whenever the welfare of his fellow-creatures was the subject of conversation. His understanding was not only powerful, but, unlike those of the generality of country gentlemen, marvellously subtle. He delighted in the nicest refinements of reasoning. His imagination and humour were also great, peculiar, and original ; and his style of speaking at once easy, simple, and severe. His estate was large ; he lived and died a bachelor ; and with him expired the last representative of an illustrious family. He well deserved that his portrait should be set in the imperishable brilliants of Burke ; any one acquainted with their respective characters can easily see how much they could sympathize with and admire each other.

Thus also with Lord John Cavendish, a subordinate member of the Administration. That very “tyranny of a moral philosopher,” which Walpole sarcastically ascribes to Lord John, was a habit of mind which Burke, of all men, could most thoroughly appreciate. In fact, he had himself a little of this same philosophical tyranny, and knew its value in other men. At the name of Lord John Cavendish a quaint little figure claims the historian’s attention. In outward appearance he might, from the rusticity of his dress and the bluntness of his manners, have been taken for a plain and somewhat morose rustic or mechanic ; none who, without knowing him, saw him for the first time, would have supposed him to be an individual so high in rank as a country gentleman, much more a distinguished Member of Parliament, and the nearest relative of one of the greatest dukes in the land.* Cold, dry, and reserved, with all the bashfulness of the Cavendish family, at his first approach Lord John was not attractive. They who knew him not, might begin to entertain a secret prejudice against him, which would only vanish by degrees, as their acquaintance became more extended. When once however the thaw had begun, all that was cold in Lord John would rapidly disappear ; acquaintance would speedily ripen into cordial friendship and enthusiastic respect. Those who had at first disliked him, would now become ashamed at the injustice they had done him, as they listened to the outpourings of his mind, and admired the quickness of his perception, the retentiveness of his memory, the extent of his reading, the integrity and propriety of his political views. The character of Lord John Cavendish was beyond reproach. If not a great genius, he was a true nobleman. His in-

* Wraxall’s Historical Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 289.

fluence among his political friends was great, as indeed it deserved to be.*

The weakness of the Rockinghams as a party, called upon in 1765 to administer the affairs of the country, may be at once seen. Of high rank, of great possessions, of unexceptionable characters, of ardent patriotism, of the most lofty ideas of public virtue and political principle, they were, individually, men who in the purest times would have reflected honour on any connection, and who alone in that day maintained the true spirit of the Whigs. Collectively they were, as a party, of little energy compared with the selfish voracity of some connections, and the unscrupulous subserviency of others who were prepared to obey the dictatorship of a single mind, and without hesitation or care to sit down to enjoy the fat emoluments of office. A party composed of great noblemen, free from vulgar wants and low desires, and with little of the stimulating infusion of the democratic element, partakes of the placid and unenterprising spirit of a close senate. Lord Rockingham and his friends would rather have laid their heads upon the block than contributed in the smallest degree to ruin their country; but they had not always the masculine vigour and fearless determination which might have saved it, before the dreadful hour of sorrow and calamity had come. The torrent of popular delusion and royal frenzy could never sweep the constitutional bulwark of the Rockinghams along with them; but frequently the waters dashed over it, and buried it for awhile beneath the surging deluge: and though it appeared again, uninjured by the storm, and capable of saving much that

* Burke has himself left us an imperfect delineation of Lord John Cavendish. Appendix to Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 526.

was precious in the general devastation, yet the ravages of the great flood, which might be seen on every side, it had been powerless to prevent.

Their defects were, however, more apparent in Opposition. In this Administration, so far as it depended upon themselves, there was no want of courage, vigour, or decision. Their weakness was occasioned, not by their own policy, but the perverseness, hostility, and treachery of those who ought to have supported them. Lord Rockingham's friends were but a portion of the Government called by his name. By the force of opposing currents which should have taken the same direction, he found in every great emergency that the vessel was not true to the helm, that with the most skilful pilotage he could scarcely make any way, and that he was every moment in danger of running upon the rocks.

Lord Northington, the Chancellor, continued in office, grumbling at his colleagues, and peevishly determined to oppose every measure they should introduce.* Under his command there was the whole household brigade, who knew how reluctantly the King had accepted, in his extreme need, the services of the Ministers, were prepared at any given signal to revolt from Lord Rockingham's standard, and even in the heat of the battle to join perfidiously with his foes. The strict discipline and obedience to orders, without which a Ministry, like an army, degenerates into a mere rabble, and is sure to meet with a disgraceful rout, could under such circumstances have no existence. The natural law of ministerial cohesion had no force over so many mutually repulsive particles. The adherents of the Court, strong in numbers, and unrestrained by a single scruple, were not the only dis-

* Grenville Papers, vol. iii.

turbing influences. There was the eccentric orb of Pitt blazing through space, and by his powerful attraction counteracting the tendency of some of the most honest members of the Cabinet from gravitating to their legitimate centre.

No person, not even one of the Ministers themselves, could believe in the stability of the Administration. The Governors of the Bank of England complimented Grenville, and hoped that he would soon return to power.* All the followers of the rival factions openly scoffed at the untried and inexperienced men who had ventured, without Pitt, at the request of the Sovereign, to carry on the government. Many politicians whom the Prime Minister had benefited, immediately disclaimed all allegiance. With difficulties of the most serious nature pressing around him, Lord Rockingham could not even count on the support of that opinion which generally secures its favourite from the consequences of an ignominious failure, and not unfrequently commands success.

One of the first acts of the Ministers was to confer a peerage on Pitt's friend, Chief Justice Pratt, whom they created Earl of Camden. A letter from the new peer to Lord Temple is extant, showing how little he thought himself obliged, only a few days after his elevation, to those who had raised him to the aristocratic eminence, and how precarious he considered Lord Rockingham's position. "The Ministry," he wrote, on the 7th of August, "is at last upon its legs; the offices and Boards are settled, so that there is the outward form and body of an Administration, but I can't yet tell who is that Prometheus that is to give it animation, or will

* Grenville Papers.

undertake to steal fire from Heaven for that purpose : time will show.”* These observations were written in a sarcastic spirit, and intended of course to please Lord Temple, who had twice refused the office, which Lord Rockingham at last accepted. They may however be taken very seriously. Be of good cheer, my Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas ! Time will indeed show ; for a Prometheus has actually come down from heaven to give animation and immortality to this despised Ministry. That fire is his own genius, lent to him by the Great Author of Nature to illuminate for awhile that little portion of the universe in which he has been born, and will for some few years be a denizen. The divine flame will then return to the heaven whence it came, but also leave around Lord Rockingham and his Ministry an imperishable lustre.

But which of these great noblemen and gentlemen is this welcome Prometheus ? Is he the meek Conway, or the morose Grafton, or the honest Dowdeswell, or the learned Lord John Cavendish, or the veteran Duke of Newcastle, or the virtuous Marquis himself ? Is he among the secondary members of the Ministry, either the erratic Charles Townshend, the false George Onslow, the mediæval Egmont, the busy Dyson, the sour Northington, the irresolute Charles Yorke, the servile Barrington, or the pious Dartmouth ? The enumeration is vain. In no list of the Ministry will the name of this remarkable individual be found. He was an outsider of no weight in the country, of no wealth, of no political eminence. Lord Camden would indeed have been amazed had he been told that his Prometheus was a young man, who, having just become the private secretary to the

* Grenville Papers, vol. iii. p. 77.

Prime Minister, had all the high morality and steady principle of Lord Rockingham, combined with more than the fervid splendour and political sagacity of the idolized Pitt, and more than the lawyer-like love of detail and plodding perseverance of Grenville ; whose coming was to be an era in the British Parliament ; who was to unite politics, eloquence, and philosophy as they had never before been united in ancient or modern times, not even by Cicero, not even by Bacon ; and who, in what related to the affairs of Government, was to display such an all-embracing sympathy, with a depth of philosophical reflection, a power of insight, and a richness of imagination as could be paralleled in another province of literature by Shakespeare alone.

Burke has himself indicated the day on which he first became acquainted with Lord Rockingham.* It was on the 17th of July, 1765, a few days after the arrangement of the Cabinet. He has also himself stated to whom he was principally indebted for this valuable appointment. It was to his friend William Burke. How William Burke could be in a position to influence so materially the fortunes of his kinsman, it is hopeless to conjecture. As he was also appointed Under-Secretary to General Conway, it is however apparent that he had, during the time when Edmund was wasting his energies in Hamilton's service, been pushing himself forward with some success. He still remains little more than a name. It is singular that in all the recent publications of the political letters, diaries, and memoirs, which have thrown so much light on the history of George III.'s reign, and made us minutely acquainted with the character of the most subordinate personages

* Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

then engaged in political pursuits, of William Burke scarcely anything has been revealed.

At the time when the Prime Minister and his Secretary thus became connected, they were not at all known to each other. Burke knew nothing of Lord Rockingham's personal character or political principles,* and Lord Rockingham knew nothing of Burke's private life, or his lofty disposition. Chance had thrown them together, and they had not begun to transact their business when the circulation of some vile calumnies, in which Hamilton's hand may be easily seen, threatened to put them asunder.

One day the Duke of Newcastle hastened in a great panic to Lord Rockingham. The Prime Minister had been deceived ; he was the victim of an impostor ; the leader of the Whigs had taken a Papist, a Jesuit, a Jacobite for his private secretary. His Grace might well hobble up Lord Rockingham's stairs, and throw himself round his neck. By the spirit of Somers ! Was ever pure Whiggism threatened with such a danger ? To be betrayed in its very citadel, with Lord Rockingham as Prime Minister and his Grace as Privy Seal ! The Marquis, who was as much a Whig purist as the old Duke, became much alarmed. He sent for his new private secretary, and communicated to him the information he had just received. It was not difficult for Burke to disprove these malignant scandals. It was not difficult for him to prove not only that he was not a Roman Catholic, and had not been educated at a Catholic seminary, but that he had really been a student of Trinity College, Dublin, and had invariably been on the side of the House of Hanover. That he had Roman

* Speech of April 19, 1774.

Catholic relations, and that he strongly disapproved of those penal laws, his hatred of which had probably given Hamilton, and Hamilton's instruments, the pretence of representing him as one of the disqualified race, who were then, by all loyal subjects of the House of Brunswick, regarded in much the same light as Chartists and Socialists now are, he neither would nor could deny. Lord Rockingham was soon satisfied that all he had been told was a base fabrication, and informed Burke that he had to think nothing more of the matter, as every suspicion of his good faith had been completely removed. It seemed easy to the noble Marquis thus by a few soothing words to compensate for the injustice that had been done. Burke was however much hurt, and Lord Rockingham had yet to learn how high-souled was the integrity of the man with whom he was now in communication. As he had thrown his pension to the winds rather than give Hamilton the least ground of accusation against him, so he now stood boldly up, and declared unhesitatingly to Lord Rockingham that he had rendered it impossible for him to continue any longer his private secretary. With a noble ingenuousness he said, "Your Lordship may tell me that you disbelieve these reports now ; but a rankling of doubt must unconsciously remain in your mind, which at a future day will have some influence in your conduct towards me ; and no earthly consideration can induce me to stand in such relationship with any one whose complete confidence I do not possess."

Lord Rockingham was struck by this magnanimity. It was very different language from what he and the Duke of Newcastle had been accustomed to hear from the lips of their political dependants. At such words

the artificial barriers of rank fell down, and man stood face to face with man. The Marquis began to respect his private secretary, and to see the value of the treasure he had accidentally found. He assured Burke that his trust in him should for the future be implicit; that his frank declaration, so far from being displeasing, had strengthened him in his good opinion; and that there should never afterwards be between them the slightest reserve. And never was a compact kept with more fidelity on both sides, says Lord Charlemont, who by preserving this anecdote, and answering for its authenticity, deserves the gratitude of all who delight in seeing that the lofty sentiments of great men are not always, as sceptical mediocrity would assure us, confined to their books and speeches, but influence their daily life, and originate in genuine greatness of soul.*

In a letter to Garrick, Burke affectingly alluded to the little gleam of prosperity which had at last fallen upon his fortune, and also to the malignant efforts of Hamilton and others, to prevent him from enjoying it. His situation, he assured the great actor, was very agreeable, and he did not despair of it being in time solidly advantageous. The designs of his enemies, who had made a desperate stroke at his liberty, fortune, and reputation, had failed, and the most implacable malice had been frustrated. Friends had taken up his cause. If there were some persons capable of making the basest return for long, faithful, and affectionate service, it was gratifying to find that there were others who, without any previous service at all, could come forward nobly and disinterestedly in aid of their acquaintances. Of these, Burke particularly mentions William Fitzherbert, who

* Hardy, vol. ii. p. 281.

had been elected Member for Derby in 1760, and was a Member of the Board of Trade under Lord Rockingham. He was probably the common friend whom Burke afterwards spoke of as introducing him to the Prime Minister, and who, next to William Burke, had the chief share in promoting this auspicious union. "You know and love him," says Burke to Garrick, "but I can assure you, until we can talk some late matters over, you, even you, can have no adequate idea of the worth of that man."*

Fitzherbert is well known to all the readers of Boswell and Mrs. Piozzi, from Johnson's singular analytical criticism of his character.† Without possessing shining talents, his presence was universally acceptable in every social circle. He was at his ease with all men, and all men were at their ease with him. He seemed to be witty, though it was difficult to say in what his wit consisted: it was the result of the general impression left by his natural liveliness, obliging manners, gentle temper, and real goodness of heart. And yet his virtues, numerous as they were, also, on reflection, appeared like his wit, rather negative than positive. He was unobtrusive. He offended no man's egotism by his pretensions. He hurt no man's feelings, either by his satire or his indifference. He stood in no man's way. His house was open to all the distinguished writers and speakers of his time; and, as he said little himself, and listened attentively to the colloquial displays of others, he was regarded by them as one of the most delightful of com-

* Garrick's Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 189, etc. There are other two letters from Burke to Garrick given in this Correspondence, which are evidently mis-dated. They must have been written in 1768 and in 1769 (pp. 188-208).

† Boswell's Johnson; Mrs. Piozzi's Anecdotes.

panions. He was never better employed than in levelling the obstructions which a devilish ingenuity had erected to bar Burke's progress in the great career for which he was so fitted, and was to render so illustrious.

This difficulty was removed. The way was clear before Burke, and his great talents for public affairs, which had until now remained almost dormant, could have free play in their proper field. But he did not forget, amid the unaccustomed bustle of politics, to provide for those who had in any degree a claim to his protection. On being informed by Sir Joshua Reynolds that a personal inspection of the great works of Italian art was indispensable to perfect Barry in his profession, Edmund and William Burke resolved, at their own expense, to send the young artist abroad, and give him the advantages of studying at Rome. Burke had, therefore, only begun to be inured to his labours as private secretary to the Prime Minister, when Barry, by his direction, crossed the Channel, and was busied in examining the pictures in the French capital. In all the excitement of his new duties, the kind patron still anxiously looked for letters from the painter on his road to Italy, and found time in the course of the busy year to write him more than one earnest and friendly epistle of advice. The feeling which such acts of generosity ever inspire in the breast of him who does them, must have been their own reward in giving Burke renewed zest for the great business in which he was engaged.*

His situation might not seem of much value, but, in a political point of view, it was all-important. He saw everything that was going on. The characters of the

* Barry's Life and Works, vol. i. pp. 24-53.

most eminent politicians were displayed before him in both their strength and weakness. Nothing escaped his eye. Nothing was inattentively observed. Honest Dr. Leland might write enthusiastic congratulations from Dublin ; friends might flock around Burke from every side, and be profuse in their professions of devotion, and their wishes for his success ; he could listen courteously to all ; he could acknowledge with politeness the compliments of all ; but his mind was engrossed with business, and the success of the Rockingham Ministry appeared almost the sole object of his care. He found the Prime Minister to be a man of sound integrity, of great courage, of earnest zeal for the national welfare, of much sagacity, and mental elevation. He therefore devoted himself from this time forward to Lord Rockingham with a disinterested ardour, which was to some minds quite unintelligible.

All the firmness and ability of Lord Rockingham, and his immortal Secretary, were soon required. No Minister ever left the country in a more wretched condition than George Grenville. Imprudent tyranny had ended in disgraceful anarchy. A sullen discontent sat brooding on the brows of all men ; and turbulence and confusion were rife throughout the land. Government had lost all dignity. Parliament had abandoned its privileges. The freedom of debate was but a name. For their votes in the House of Commons, members had been deprived not only of their places but of their professions. Abroad, the illustrious nation which had put all its enemies under its feet, appeared to have lost all the *prestige* of so many years of uninterrupted victory and untarnished glory. Distrusted by friends, disregarded by neutrals, and despised by foes who had crouched in the dust be-

fore her, the trident seemed on the point of dropping from the irresolute hands of the mistress of the seas.

But this was not the worst evil. The new Ministers had scarcely time to consider the exigencies of their position, and to set about maturing their plans for the approaching session, when the most alarming news came from America, and the consequences of Grenville's infatuated policy began to be seen. The fierce spirits in the Colonies had been supplied with fuel for their indignation, and a terrible flame was kindled. Gallowses were erected. The collectors were compelled to resign their commissions. The Colonial Assemblies passed the most violent resolutions. From the pulpit of Henry Mahew came forth words of fire, which now found combustible material ready prepared for ignition. The oratory of Patrick Henry aroused a spirit of resistance in the bosoms of many who, until now, had never dreamed of abjuring their allegiance to King George III. A general Congress of the Colonies assembled at New York ; and strong resolutions were passed against the jurisdiction of the Admiralty, and the right of the House of Commons to tax America. While the colonial representatives were engaged in these deliberations, in which the independence of America was not indistinctly foreshadowed, a ship from England with a cargo of the stamps arrived in the harbour. The flags of all the vessels were lowered. At every public office threatening bills were posted, against all who should dare to distribute the obnoxious paper. In Boston the colonists had acted with even more indignation ; riots and excesses of the most provoking nature had been committed ; and the Governor and British authority completely set at defiance. The immense trade which England had so

long carried on with her colonies was almost entirely suspended. No ship could leave an American port without stamped clearances. No debt without a stamped paper could be recovered in any court of law. As the Commissioners had resigned, and as the stamps were burnt or locked up as they arrived, there were no means to compel payment of the justest demand ; and four millions of money remained due to British merchants.

Lord Rockingham and Dowdeswell had, from their first entrance into office, to listen to memorials from commercial men, about the entire stoppage of the West Indian trade, in consequence of Grenville's teasing and innumerable regulations. But they now learnt that all colonial traffic and all British authority in America were on the point of being annihilated together. The doors of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were besieged by anxious merchants, trembling for their very means of subsistence. The arrival of every succeeding piece of intelligence from the other side of the Atlantic, only deepened the gloom which former tidings had impressed on the minds of those who were constitutionally responsible for the safety of the Empire.

What was to be done ? In such an emergency the oldest Ministers, and those who had been longest conversant with affairs, might have shrunk from the duties of their position. The untried statesmen who held the reins of power, rose to the requirements of the occasion. After much deliberation, after attending to every remonstrance, weighing patiently every testimony, and examining every precedent, orders were sent to redress the immediate evil ; and before the meeting of Parliament, Lord Rockingham and his friends, as Burke deliberately asserted years afterwards in Parliament, had

made up their minds to reverse the policy of their predecessors, and repeal the Stamp Act.*

The Stamp Act was to be repealed: but on what principle was it to be repealed? There were members of Lord Rockingham's Cabinet who agreed with the American distinction between internal and external taxation, and advised their colleagues not only to repeal the Stamp Act, but also, in the preamble of the bill, to deny the right of Parliament to make enactments for the purposes of revenue. Some of the Ministers were ready to repeal the Stamp Act only partially, and to preserve just so much of it as to maintain an acknowledgment of the right. The immediate followers of Lord Rockingham, obeying the impulse which the private secretary communicated to the Prime Minister, were prepared heartily to vote for the repeal of the Stamp Act, as contrary to the sound principles of equity, and to the restrictive commercial system under which the Colonies were placed; but they could not admit that the power of Parliament was not supreme for all purposes, in every part of the British dominions. They determined, and their colleagues were compelled to go along with them, to declare at once the authority of the Legislature unlimited, and to repeal completely and for ever the impolitic Act which had produced such alarming consequences.

Parliament met to fill up the vacancies on the 17th of December. As the new Ministers, by their acceptance

* This has been denied by those who deserted Lord Rockingham, and were, of course, eager to excuse their treachery by making it appear that there was nothing but vacillation in the Cabinet. But no authority can be so great as Burke's express statement, in his speech of the 19th of April, 1774, made in the presence of enemies who were acquainted with the facts, and who certainly would have contradicted him had he not represented them with scrupulous accuracy.

of office, were until their re-election incapable of sitting on the Treasury bench, or of facing their opponents, it was not unreasonably expected that the meeting on that day would be merely nominal, and that every one, as usual, would see the propriety of abstaining from all attacks until the Ministers should again be in their places and the real business of the session begin. This was not the opinion of Grenville. Pitt, being still absent from the House of Commons, the dismissed Minister regarded himself as absolute master in the popular assembly; and, enraged at the apparent tendency of the Royal speech, he thought fit to declaim with much energy and vehemence against the rebellious conduct of the Americans, and the criminal supineness of the Government for not at once suppressing such disturbances by the sword. He spoke as a dictator. There was scorn in his eye, defiance on his lip, and contempt for all who differed from him in opinion, or thought of questioning the wisdom of his administration. For the moment his ascendancy was scarcely questioned. As he sat down amid the applause of his friends, he never dreamed that one under whose wit and argument he was frequently to suffer, and who was to be to him and to his policy what light is to darkness, the good to the evil principle, was on the point of entering the lists.

CHAPTER XI.

1765-1766.

FIRST SESSION IN PARLIAMENT.

ON the 26th of December, Burke was elected Member for Wendover. This borough was a close one, under the influence of Ralph, Earl Verney, with whom William Burke had for some time been intimately associated,* and was intended by his patron himself for the representation of this constituency. He generously resigned his pretensions in favour of his brilliant relative, and was himself brought into Parliament for Bedwin, another of Lord Verney's seats.

The session was approaching in real earnest. Burke was no longer to sit a spectator in the gallery, but to take his place on the green benches, and have the opportunity of giving utterance to the earnest convictions which had so long been shut up in his bosom without a power of expression. At his election, however, he caught a severe cold, and his friends became anxious. He might be nervously impatient, he might feel a little sickness at the heart, as the hour of trial drew near ; but he also felt a just confidence in his own powers ;† and, like the noble war-horse, scented the coming conflict from afar. The friends who had known him so long, and so long wished to see him in the situation he was at last happily placed,

* Grenville Papers.

† Works, vol. i. p. 47.

experienced much eager emotion as the day which was to test his courage and confidence came on. The affectionate wife who had been so true to him through so many hard trials, the good-humoured and kind-hearted father-in-law who had so long patiently assisted him, the devoted friend and kinsman who had made Edmund and not himself the first object of his endeavours, all naturally felt their hearts beat faster and faster as the parliamentary campaign opened, and Burke's prowess was to be put to the test. Dr. Markham found time, amid the cares of his numerous family, among whom the measles had been recently very troublesome, to write his good wishes for the success of the new Member for Wendover. Now or never was the time to drown, in the shout of victory, the hiss of the slanderer, the whisper of the detractor, the sneer of the envious, and the insolence of the fool.

Great was the interest with which this meeting of Parliament was regarded by all Europe and America. Never could orator desire a more conspicuous stage for the display of his powers. The fate of great nations, and the whole civilized world, besides the prosperity of English commerce, the dignity of the English Legislature, and the existence of the Rockingham Ministry, depended upon the course which should be adopted. With feelings too deep for words to express, Burke took his seat among the supporters of the Government on the 14th of January, 1766.

He witnessed a scene to which the Commons had long been strangers. Pitt had arrived in town that morning ; and, with all the impressiveness of a first-rate actor, unexpectedly entered the House. He rose to speak on the Address in answer to the King's speech. All eyes were fixed upon him ; every ear was stretched to catch the

words which came oracularly from his mouth. Burke sitting silent and unregarded through this first night in Parliament, and all the honourable Members listening with breathless interest to Pitt's glowing declamation, is the spectacle that may easily be pictured. Pitt's arm is outstretched ; the lightning flashes from his eyes ; now his voice is as gentle as the whispering of the summer breeze, for he is pleading in plaintive tones for the Colonies ; and now his tones become like harsh thunder, as he vehemently declaims not only against the exercise of the power, but the very existence of the right in Parliament to lay taxes on America. There was much in this first speech of Chatham on the Address, of questionable prudence, to one who, like Burke, had already begun to dislike the violent assertions of all mere abstract doctrines. The absolute denial of the right of taxation must have sounded rather strangely in his ears, and especially when followed by a strong declaration of the power of Parliament to prevent the manufacture of a lock of wool, a horseshoe, or a hobnail, according to the principle of commercial monopoly.* How could these conflicting propositions be reconciled ? In the opinion of Pitt, Parliament was in one case all force, and in the other all impotence. But, as if eager to make some compensation for his long silence, the orator gratified honourable Members this evening by a second speech, which was still more eloquent and still more uncompromising than the first. In reply to Grenville's hysterical denunciations of rebellion, he electrified the House by exclaiming, in tones of thunder, "I rejoice that America has resisted!" This vehement ejaculation, so potent in its effect on the House, did not pass unnoticed in the galleries. It was eagerly taken down

* Moffatt, in Bancroft.

by the American agents, and transmitted across the wide Atlantic. Far in the wilderness it made the heart of many'a hardy husbandman throb with a stern exultation; and, more than any other sentence spoken during these American troubles, encouraged that nascent desire for independence which imprudent legislation had provoked.

That evening, contrary to the general belief, and the repeated statements of biographers and historians, Burke remained silent. Of the important debates during this session there is only one scanty account. It was taken down by Sir Robert Deans and Lord Charlemont, who, feeling Ireland interested in the great question of American taxation, exerted themselves to preserve some authentic record of the principal speeches. Their report was published at the time, in a manner calculated to avoid incurring a prosecution for a breach of privilege; and it has been incorporated with 'The Parliamentary History.' In that report, not only does the name of Edmund Burke not appear as one of the speakers on the Address, but, as if to meet at once the rumour that Pitt spoke after Burke, and publicly extolled his speech of that day, it is there stated that Nugent first addressed the House, and that "Mr. Pitt spoke next."* Lord Charlemont, who was Burke's friend, and as much interested as any person, in his success, would scarcely have forgotten to mention such a remarkable circumstance on the first night of the session. The only allusion to Burke's speeches in this year is found in Walpole, who, though absent in the first months of the Parliamentary campaign, states that he founded his narrative of these debates on the private notes of members taken at the time. His relation of Burke's first oratorical efforts has

* Parliamentary History, vol. xvi. p. 215.

an appearance of trustworthiness, and may, so far as it goes, be regarded as correct.*

It was on the 27th of January when a great debate arose on the propriety of accepting the petition of the American Congress, that Burke first heard his own voice resound within the walls of St. Stephen's, and astonished the House by his command of language, power of argument, and extent of information. It was on that day when even Pitt listened with admiration to the young member's maiden speech, congratulated the Ministry on the acquisition they had made, and praised him for his ability and ingenuity. And Pitt might well praise the new speaker. For it is somewhat remarkable that in his first speech Burke disagreed with the leading members of the Rockingham Ministry in the House of Commons, and supported the view which their lofty rival afterwards took in the course of the same debate. This was the first time in which the States had come before Parliament in a federal capacity. To acknowledge such a union by receiving their collective petition was regarded as dangerous, and the courtiers strongly remonstrated against the admission of such a document. The petition was presented by George Cooke, Member for Middlesex, and one of Pitt's followers; it was therefore supposed to have the great leader's countenance. By the Administration this seems to have been considered an open question. Dowdeswell and Conway objected to receive the petition. Burke took the more indulgent view of the motion, and at once drew one of those profound distinctions for which he was so remarkable. It had been said that, to allow a petition

* Mr. Bancroft, who has also seen some American reports of these debates, also rejects the statement that Burke spoke on the Address, and follows Walpole's narrative. *History of the United States*, vol. iv. ch. xxi.

of confederate Colonies to lie on the table, was contrary to the rules of the House, and subversive of its authority. The presentation of such a petition, Burke forcibly argued in reply, was in itself an acknowledgment of the House's jurisdiction.* Then Pitt must have risen, and pronounced, at the commencement of his speech on the same side, his first encomium on the new member, about which so much has been said and so little can be known.

It was a proud moment for Burke. The steady fortitude of years was at length rewarded. His first speech had been received with general applause; the gates of the temple of fame had at length opened, and Pitt himself had trumpeted forth his name. As hour after hour of debate wore away, and as Lord John Cavendish, at midnight, to avoid a defeat, moved the order of the day, a little private exultation must have been felt by the Member for Wendover, who had overcome so many difficulties, and now saw before him the boundless prospect of future greatness.

He soon proved that he was not, like Hamilton, to content himself with the delivery of a single piece of studied rhetoric. Another great effort followed, and eclipsed even the first. Only seven days after Burke had opened his lips in Parliament, General Conway moved the first of the resolutions which were to constitute the Declaratory Act, and which affirmed that the power of the King and Parliament extended over the Colonies in all cases whatsoever. The House was crowded; all England and all America seemed present at the debate. The young Member for Wendover again came forward, and made such a speech as filled the House with wonder and astonishment. Never before had such

* Walpole's George III., vol. ii. p. 272.

powers been displayed in Parliament. He was now warmly defending his friends, and opposing Pitt; yet his speech was declared to have far excelled that of every other orator; the popular idol, who had been so long unrivalled in brilliancy of expression, himself not excepted.* In answer to Pitt's argument, that the Americans could not be taxed by the British Parliament because they were not represented, he urged that, according to the same view, neither were nine-tenths of the English people represented. Commercial restraints and port-duties were acknowledged to be legal; how, then, was the power of Parliament limited, and where was the difference between port-duties and Stamp Acts? A duty levied in the ports of Virginia affected all the inland plantations of Virginia, wherever tobacco was grown, miles upon miles from the sea. As long as there were dependencies there must be a superintending power, with a right to regulate and control. This power, from its very nature, could not be accurately defined. In exercising it, administration must be governed by circumstances. The charters of the different Colonies were against the Americans, and established the existence of the theoretical right of taxation; but it did not follow that such a right ought always to be carried into practice. Statesmen, when dealing with the question in which the feelings and prejudices of multitudes were concerned, ought to act with temper and management. Principle ought ever to be subordinate to government.†

As nearly all parties agreed on the propriety of passing the Declaratory Act, the first resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority. The only dissentients

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 97.

† Walpole's George III., vol. ii. p. 280.

were Pitt and a few of his friends. But not many of those who cheered Burke's great speech could have felt all the force of his arguments. His eloquence was admired ; his conclusion was accepted as correct ; yet, had his advice been followed, from that moment all attempts to enforce the right would have been abandoned for ever. Why then, it has been asked, pass the Declaratory Act at all ? The difficulties which beset Lord Rockingham on every side are the best justification of that measure. He and Burke had determined that the repeal of the Stamp Act should go hand-in-hand with the bill declaring the omnipotence of Parliament ;* and the Stamp Act could, perhaps, never have been repealed, had not some acknowledgment of the right have been preserved.

The young orator had fairly gained the ear of the House. The method he pursued to perfect himself in the business of legislation, was somewhat different from that of the young aristocratic politician, who considers that he amply qualifies himself for Parliament and the Ministry, by reading newspapers at his club. Feeling that he had been chosen to a trust far beyond the estimation of the vulgar, Burke set himself to analyze the whole work of Government, and the complicated interests of all the British Empire. He subjected the commerce, the revenue, the constitution, and the foreign policy, to the closest scrutiny, and formed to himself a map of the whole country over which he was to travel. He was then in the prime of life ; but flesh and blood could not sustain this immense amount of intellectual labour. His constitution gave way under the incessant toil, and, prostrate on the bed of sickness, it seemed to himself that death

* Speech of April 19th, 1774.

would have made almost any sacrifice to avert the impending repeal, and to frustrate it had been negotiating with all the different factions in opposition to the Government, submitted at last with the worst possible grace to a necessity he could not resist. Every seat in the House was soon filled. The merchants, who had their all depending on the resolutions then to be moved, crowded the lobby, and anxiously awaited the decision. Pitt was suffering from his old enemy, the gout, but he came down to the House on crutches, and had his limbs ostentatiously swathed in flannel. Cheers greeted him as he made his way through the lobby, and the traders, and the American agents, looked upon him as their saviour. Burke passed through the crowd, unrecognized and unknown. But his mind was full of the importance of the occasion, and the mighty consequences depending on the issue of the debate. He knew the obstacles which were impeding the march of the Government. He knew that Lord Rockingham was by some betrayed and by others coldly supported. He knew that intrigue was in the closet, and discord in the Cabinet. But he had made up his mind to stand by his patron to the last; and he manfully and cheerfully prepared for the coming conflict.* They who had looked upon him at that time, might have observed an expression more than usually stern and severe on his thoughtful countenance.

Conway, as ministerial leader in the House of Commons, opened the debate. The General's arguments were wise and statesmanlike. Had he not afterwards been a member of an Administration which revived the question of American taxation, this speech might have

* Speech of April 19, 1774.

been considered as eminently sagacious and profound. Unfortunately, Conway's subsequent conduct showed that he spoke the opinions of others, and that he was by no means so wise as he appeared to be.

Jenkinson came to the rescue of the Bill, as he might fitly do ; for not even Grenville had so great a share in originating the scheme of internal taxation. He moved that it should be modified, and spoke the sentiments of the King. To him Burke replied, and again extorted the applause of his audience, by the novelty of the political philosophy he introduced into the discussion, and which on the jaded ears of those who had been fatigued with the hackneyed arguments that had been so long echoed from one speaker to another, fell with a fascinating freshness.* Pitt and Grenville both followed in the debate ; the one spoke with his usual eloquence, and the other with his usual obstinacy. At half-past one the next morning, the House divided ; and the Rockingham Administration won its greatest victory. Notwithstanding all the efforts of courtiers, and the combined factions of Grenville and Bedford, this weak Government restored peace to the empire, and carried the motion for the repeal of the Stamp Act by an overpowering majority. Burke has left us a striking picture of the scene that winter's morning, when he, at the side of Conway, pressed through the thick ranks of merchants who had stood waiting during the long night, until the contest was determined. Three loud cheers were given as the gallant soldier was recognized, and Burke, though the applauding shouts were not intended for himself, sympathized keenly with this enthusiastic outburst. He looked proudly in the face of his leader, whose features

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 103.

reflected all the joyful excitement of the moment, and he hoped that the union then cemented among the generous friends of freedom, by a common struggle and a common victory, might be eternal.* It was not his fault that this patriotic hope was disappointed, that the torch of discord was rekindled, that England and America were set against each other, that the hallowed tie which connected parent and child was dissolved in blood; and that with mutual hatred, instead of mutual love at their hearts, they separated for ever.

Hitherto his efforts in the House had been all set speeches, and it might be thought, that he was unequal to the apt retort, and the prompt reply. Two evenings after his speech on the Stamp Act, he was unexpectedly called up, and his brilliant speech, on the spur of the moment, appeared to the best critics as admirable as his more elaborate orations.†

As an orator and political philosopher his fame now stood high. Before the session ended he also showed himself a profound political economist. There was as yet no Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. David Hume had indeed, in one or two short Essays, suggested some sound ideas on the principles of commerce; but they had been rather hinted at than fully expressed, and these principles were as yet undeveloped. On this point, both the prejudices of Grenville and Pitt coincided. Both true Protectionists, they looked with horror at the notion of England being dependent on other countries for the raw material of her manufactures. The doctrines of free trade were now first introduced by Burke into the House of Commons.

There were many meetings of merchants engaged in

* Speech, April 19, 1774. † Correspondence, vol. i. p. 103.

colonial commerce, held at the house of the Minister ; and at all these meetings Burke was a diligent attendant. He sought for information far and near. He cordially promoted the relaxation of those commercial regulations which really fettered trade, discouraged industry, and gave a premium to the contraband traffic they professed to destroy. The petitions of the merchants were referred to a committee. Grenville was almost beside himself with rage, and in one of his violent paroxysms thought fit to suppose, as the height of folly and wickedness, that the Rockingham Ministry would next assail the “ sacred Act of Navigation.” He again came under the lash of Burke, who keenly ridiculed, with a wit which was not without its sting, the notion that the Navigation Act was more sacred than any other decision of the Legislature.* On the idea of free ports, which the Ministers had taken up at the suggestion of the mercantile body, Burke also argued strongly in favour of these liberal opinions ; and one of his economical speeches gave great offence to Pitt, who remembered it afterwards to his discredit. Mr. Burke might be a man of parts. He might be an ingenious speaker. But his notions and maxims on trade, could never have the approval of Pitt, who, from his lofty elevation, thought fit to look down very complacently on the Member for Wendover. “ Nothing can be more unsound,” said the proud statesman, in commenting subsequently on the commercial doctrines which Burke had broached in this session,—“ nothing can be more unsound and repugnant to every first principle of manufacture or commerce than the rendering so noble a branch as the cottons dependent for the first material upon the produce of French and Danish

* Walpole's Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 316.

isles, instead of British."* Who was this Mr. Burke, that he dared, with his wild doctrines of free trade, thus to shock a great commoner's ideas of political economy? Was not even honest Beckford against this project of free ports, because it affected his personal interests† in the West Indies? and ought not even illustrious patriots to serve their friends?

But Pitt's displeasure, though a few short months before it might have been seriously detrimental to Burke's dawning prospects, was now of little moment. Burke had become a political power. A memorial, signed by seventy-seven merchants of Lancaster, was presented to him, thanking him for the attention he had given to the commerce of Great Britain, and for endeavouring to extend to the Colonies the advantages of a free trade. In one short session he had proved himself to be the most efficient speaker in the Commons, and might soon command his own terms. No young politician, aided by all the artificial supports of rank and friends, from the time of Somers through the whole eighteenth century and down to the present day, has ever done so much in one single session as Burke did in the same period, and by his genius alone, to establish his parliamentary renown. Neither the elder nor the younger Pitt, nor Fox, nor Sheridan, nor Canning, nor Peel, achieved in the same space of time a shadow of Burke's reputation. Old men of letters, trading politicians, young men of fashion, and soldiers of fortune were alike astonished at the effect he had produced, and spoke of it with enthusiastic admiration. Johnson's words are as true now as when he wrote them to Langton; Burke had "gained more repu-

* Appendix to Lord Mahon's History, vol. vi. p. 1.

† Walpole's George III., vol. ii. p. 317.

tation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before."* The jovial Dr. Hay, though a dull speaker himself, was considered a good judge of oratory in others, and he repeatedly expressed himself to Dr. Marriott in equally encomiastic language. This praise was communicated by Dr. Marriott to Burke himself, who of course was expected to be highly gratified at such a panegyric from the minion of the Bedfords.† The Duke of Grafton, after the session was ended, spoke even to Pitt of Burke as the readiest man upon all points perhaps in the whole House; and in another sentence he indicated that in his ministerial capacity he had had the means of testifying to Burke's scrupulous integrity; for he emphatically declared him to be one who may be thoroughly trusted wherever he acknowledged an obligation.‡ A little later, Colonel Charles Lee, writing to the Prince of Poland, remarked that a young Irishman had sprung up, as if by magic, in the House of Commons, and had surprised every one by the power of his eloquence and the extent of his knowledge, comprehending every subject, foreign and domestic, which could employ the mind of a politician.§

The fame which he thus immediately acquired as an orator, and the powerful impression which his first speeches produced on the audience, will appear somewhat extraordinary to all who have accepted, without examination, the common opinion that Burke, however excellent might be the literary and philosophical merit of his great orations, was ineffective as a mere speaker in Parliament. The truth is, that there has been long

* Boswell's Johnson.

† Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 49.

‡ Chatham's Correspondence, vol. i. p. 111. § Lee's Life, p. 297.

prevalent on this question, a very mistaken notion which Goldsmith's famous allusions to Burke in his *Retaliation* powerfully contributed to originate and perpetuate. Two or three epigrammatic sentences in rhyme have stood in the place of all argument and all reason. They were at once adopted as true by those who were jealous of Burke; and this metrical description of his orations has been regarded as correct, while it is not at all improbable that Goldsmith never heard Burke make a single speech in the House of Commons, or in any other place. That in later years he was heard with some impatience by the younger and less reflecting portion of the assembly, is undeniable. But it is not more undeniablae that no other orator, long after Goldsmith's poem was familiar to everybody, produced greater immediate effects; or that in the whole course of his career in Parliament none ever achieved, according to the testimony of such men as Chatham, Gibbon, Wellesley, and even Fox himself, purer and more incontestable oratorical triumphs.

Tall, and apparently endowed with much vigour of body, his presence was noble, and his appearance prepossessing. In later years, the first peculiarity which caught the eye as Burke walked forwards, as his custom was, to speak in the middle of the House, were his spectacles, which, from shortness of sight, seemed never absent from his face. But as yet he had no habitual occasion for such useful optical auxiliaries, and his bright eyes beamed forth with all their overpowering animation. A black silk ribbon, by which an eyeglass was suspended, appeared on his frill and waistcoat. His dress, though not slovenly, was by no means such as would have suited a leader of fashion. His coat was not very smart. He had the air of a man who

was full of thought and care, and to whom his outward appearance was not of the slightest consideration. But, as a set-off to this disadvantage, there was in his whole deportment a sense of personal dignity and habitual self-respect, which more than compensated for the absence of the graces of the tailor. His brow was massive, and Intellect seemed to have made it her chosen temple, so illuminated it appeared with genius and expression. They who knew how amiable Burke was in his private life, and how warm and tender was the heart within, might expect to see these softer qualities depicted on his countenance. But they would have been disappointed. It was not usual at any time to see his face mantling with smiles ; he decidedly looked like a great man, but not like a meek or gentle one. He might advise an anxious gentleman "to live pleasant ;" he might, especially at this time, seem to Johnson a model of cheerful equanimity ; but assuredly he did not seem like a man to whom the world had been easy. Nor had it been. His life had been a constant struggle, and he knew it well. He had been calumniated. He had been thwarted. His means had been, and continued to be, scanty. He had to fight for, and to make good, every step he made in advance. He had to supply by his energy the languor of his friends. He was constantly under arms, and his life, more than that of almost any other man, was truly a march and a battle. All his troubles were impressed on his working features, and gave them a somewhat severe expression, which deepened as he advanced in years, until they became to some observers unpleasantly hard. The marks about the jaw, the firmness of the lines about the mouth, the stern glance of the eye, and the furrows on the expansive

forehead, were all the sad ravages left by the difficulties and sorrows of genius, and by the iron which had entered the soul.

It was only however as years rolled on, and his natural vehemence grew with the prejudices which were industriously excited in certain quarters against him, that these harsher peculiarities grew painfully obvious. From the first, his Hibernian accent might very perceptibly be distinguished whenever he began to address the House, and was not always forgotten by those who listened to him even when they were under the influence of his most eloquent inspirations. His voice was of great compass, and, expressing the depth of his convictions, gave much energy to the communication of his ideas. He never hesitated for want of words. His utterance was rapid and vehement; but quick as it was, his thoughts flowed forth with still greater freedom, and threatened to overcome the power of speech. As he spoke his head was continually in motion, and appeared now to rise and fall, and now to oscillate from side to side in a very singular manner with the nervous excitement of the speaker.*

But these were mechanical peculiarities indicative indeed of what was within, though of little moment in comparison with nobler attributes of which they were the vesture. To describe the intellectual characteristics of Burke as an orator is almost impossible. The mind, astonished at the mere contemplation of their extent and variety, can scarcely comprehend as a whole, the many splendid intellectual endowments united in one man. As Shakespeare seems not one but many poets, so Burke seems not one but many orators. The

* See Wraxall's Historical Memoirs, vol. ii. pp. 264-280.

most extensive knowledge, the most ingenious wit, the brightest fancy, the most powerful reasoning, the most profound reflection, the most copious vocabulary, the finest moral painting, the most impassioned declamation ever displayed in a political assembly, were all at the command of Burke, and were not unfrequently all exerted in a single oration. His transitions were rapid and astonishing. At one moment the House was convulsed with laughter at a pleasant sally in which the keenest wit was illuminated by the most brilliant flashes of the imagination, as lightning plays round a blade of the finest steel ; at another, his mind ranged over the lore of all ages, and from a horn of plenty, the treasures of the universe seemed to roll at the enchanter's feet ; at another, he reasoned on the science of government, as a great philosopher, and everlasting truths, applicable to all ages and nations, fell in inexhaustless profusion from his lips ; at another, his voice became deep, solemn, and almost unearthly, as he denounced, in the exalted strain of a Hebrew prophet, woe and destruction against the iniquities of the earth.

There was no pause. There was no relief. Now humorous, now pathetic, now historical, now passionate, now didactic, the ordinary politician of the counting-house, the quarter sessions, or the Government office, grew amazed, and at last confounded by such a wonderful exhibition. What had the business of Parliament to do with these things ? A servile placeman, whose range of political vision extended only from quarter-day to quarter-day, and a leading Minister, who thought only of the night's division, at last grew tired of the most eloquent wisdom. The speaker besides taxed the powers of his hearers as well as his own, and to under-

stand him, it was necessary to follow his flights with the mind at full stretch. Thus the man who in a Parliament of philosophers would have been acknowledged as the greatest orator that had ever existed, grew, when the audience had become accustomed to him, in a Parliament of ordinary English gentlemen, some corrupt, some ignorant, many stupid, and all partisans, to be represented as a Dinner Bell. They did not come into the House of Commons to learn political philosophy, and they would not be taught. The common staple of Parliamentary debate, which had been handed down from Parliament to Parliament from time immemorial, was for them quite enough. They thought all this eloquence, argument, and illustration, of no importance as regarded the simple question on which they had long made up their minds, and on which they differed totally from the voluble and indefatigable Irishman, who, overlooking the ignorant present, caught a glimpse of the Eternal ; and pleaded, in the tones of his native land; the cause of justice and the future. He knew that, notwithstanding the indifference of vulgar minds, what he said was really of great moment ; he did not merely think ; he did not merely reason ; HE SAW ; and he therefore only became more vehement as the country gentlemen fell asleep.

It was only, however, in later years, when he was hopelessly struggling against the powerful majorities of the Court, and his opponents fell into the habit of considering what he said of no consequence as regarded the mere result of the debate, that his irritability and pertinacity sometimes contended vainly against the somnolent and gastronomic propensities of the thoughtless and the frivolous senators, who thought fit, with youthful petulance, to sneer at his earnestness, and to disregard

his wisdom. In 1766, his defects in temper were not prominent, and he was heard with unalloyed gratification. The time was yet far distant when the younger members of the Whig party would think it their interest and their delight to exalt, at the expense of the matured adviser of Rockingham, Cavendish, and Savile, the oratorical and political abilities of a new leader of the same age as themselves, a companion in their dissipations, and of course, from his aristocratic connections, born with a divine right to take the first post from a mere plebeian statesman, who was only the greatest thinker on the affairs of Government, and the most eloquent political orator that had yet been known in the world.

In these very months, a fine boy had been introduced to him, as the son of a veteran politician, who was instinctively shunned as tainted with the foulest corruption by the followers of Lord Rockingham. Burke was struck by the ingenuousness and precocious ability of his juvenile acquaintance. From his infancy, the boy's intelligence and vivacity had been remarkable. He had been treated with extravagant fondness, and pampered with excessive indulgence. At fourteen he had been taken from Eton by his father, and by him at once initiated into the fashionable gaieties of Paris, and introduced to the gaming table at Spa. The seeds of evil, so early sown by the parental hand, soon germinated with rank luxuriance in a soil fitted for the cultivation both of great vices and great virtues. He had come up from Oxford on account of the indisposition of his father, and took a warm interest in the stormy debates on America. Sir George Macartney, a countryman and friend of Burke, was then at the Court of St. Peters-

burg; and it is pleasing to find the youth informing this eccentric diplomatist, that he had communicated to Burke a speech which Macartney had made to the Empress Catherine, and that he “admired it vastly.”* Always accessible to the young and ingenuous, Burke pitied this youth of seventeen, with such rare talents, and exposed to so many temptations. They became friends. Burke afterwards undertook the political instruction of the promising lad, and, under such a monitor, the evils which could never be quite eradicated were in some measure checked in their growth, and room was given for the latent virtues to spring up. The tares and the wheat still grew together; but that the wheat was not overpowered by the tares, was principally owing to Burke’s generous husbandry. The good ultimately triumphed, the pernicious effect of a father’s infatuation was done away by one who became in the place of a parent; the youth in the House of Commons lived to acknowledge that it was from his kind instructor he had learnt more than from all the books he had ever read; and it was indeed chiefly owing to Edmund Burke’s assiduous teaching that the most distinguished advocacy of the principles of civil and religious freedom became associated with the name of Charles James Fox.

As Burke was thus beginning to interest himself in this young man of fashion, another individual crossed his path, in whose appearance the future was also foreshadowed. Rousseau, under the guidance of Hume, had arrived in England. The fat, laughing Scotsman, and the wild weeping Genevese, were indeed as strange a pair as could have escaped from an ark together; but they were the signs of a deluge which was yet to come.

* Memorials and Correspondence of Fox, vol. i. p. 26.

Burke had already expressed in the Annual Register his deliberate opinions on Rousseau's writings ;* and he had now an opportunity of observing the paradoxical philosopher in action. Through Hume's connection with Lord Hertford, the author of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Contrat Social*, was brought closer to ministerial personages than might have been expected. While all London, including the King and Queen, were rushing to Drury-lane Theatre to catch a glimpse of the little excitable egotist, in whose visage genius and ugliness seemed contending for mastery,—a conflict typical of the high aspirations, and low sensuality, which pervade his works, and alternately entrance and disgust the reader,—Burke was minutely inspecting the new arrival brought close under his eyes, as he might some strange monster from another clime. From day to day he watched his movements, and saw, with eyes very different from those of Hume, that there was but one passion influencing his life, and every now and then carrying him far beyond the bounds of reason. That passion was vanity.† This was the key to all his paradoxes, to all his eccentricities, to all his being. The quarrel which speedily followed between Hume and his Socrates could have been no surprise to Burke, who must indeed have been exquisitely amused. Yet even he had yet to learn that there was in this madman, so mighty is genius even in its perversion, a contagious power to make nations mad. Grave statesmen, crowned Kings, and profound philosophers, were all equally at fault. The foundations of society had been mined, the train was being laid, the spark was nearly ready, and the explosion was to make thrones,

* Annual Register, 1762, p. 227.

† Burke's Works, vol. iv. p. 374.

LIFE OF EDMUND BURKE.

and the ~~treasures~~ and powers, to rock and reel

He was born naturally, thrown together, with others and adherents of the Ministry. He was educated by Rousseau and his keeper. He went to France, intoxicated with the ardor which he had been the object of. It was now that he had been some time in France become acquainted with Burke's Discourse on the Sublime and with Dr. Smith's Theory of the Mind. But still then simple and untried, he went to Paris and saw. He went to the English who were in Paris and praising to the highest degree the French drawing-rooms, the French society, and the French literature quite interested him. In this respect. There was much pantomime and much interest women. Burke made a collection of pictures of the French ladies which he showed to a course publicly, and in this he inge-

ntly and well revealed
the principles
of his personal
character. His
manners at a man of

letters to gratify the appetite of the multitude for the marvellous. The gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome could excite wonder no more. The giants and sorcerers of the Middle Ages, with their dragons and spectres, enchanted castles and fairies dancing in the moonlight, valorous knights and rescued ladies, had also gone quite out of fashion. The marvellous in real life, the marvellous in manners, character, and situation, must be produced ; an author must exercise his inventive powers, and astound the world by moral paradoxes. This was Rousseau's method of making people stare at him ; and he found it perfectly answer. But it was unlucky for him that he did not keep it to himself, and still more unlucky that Hume betrayed his confidence to Burke ; the good David was off his guard ; he was in the presence of one who never forgot anything, and who laid this curious piece of information by, for use in the proper time and season. And it was used with terrible effect when the fireworks which the frenzied pyrotechnist had let off merely to dazzle for a moment the eye of the world, and, to gratify his own omnivorous vanity, began to be taken by millions of deluded worshipers for a galaxy of real stars, shining eternally in the heavenly firmament.*

The amusing follies of philosophers were not the only sights calculated to destroy the literary illusions of Lord Rockingham's private secretary. The sordid vices of professed patriots were equally conspicuous. On that memorable night, at Drury Lane, when the common people were attentively gazing at the King and Queen, and their Majesties were as attentively gazing at Rousseau, John Wilkes was also there, to render this monstrous harlequinade

* Burke's Works, vol. iv. p. 291.

dominations, principalities, and powers, to rock and reel to their overthrow.

Hume and Burke were, naturally, thrown together, both as men of letters and adherents of the Ministry. Burke was quietly studying both Rousseau and his keeper. Hume had just returned from France, intoxicated with the flattery and attention of which he had been the object. He was not the same man that he had been some years before, when he had first become acquainted with Burke as the author of the Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, and presented him with Smith's Theory of the Moral Sentiments. He had been then simple and unaffected. He was now pretentious and vain. He went about sneering at the barbarism of the English, who were so busy and absorbed in politics, and praising to the skies the refined society of the French drawing-rooms, that had nothing to attend to but gallantry, atheism, and metaphysics. Here the great world appeared quite insensible to his many high claims on their respect. There he had been the rage, and had played, in mock pantomime, the Sultan to the prettiest and cleverest women. He gave himself airs. He talked to Burke in raptures of the society he had lately left; and probably advised him, as soon as the session ended, to go to Paris, where he might be admired. Burke listened, of course politely, but afterwards declared that the philosopher had degenerated into a coxcomb.*

In exposing his own weaknesses, Hume also revealed those of Rousseau. He let out the secret of his principles of composition. Rousseau was cunning even in his paradoxes. He had, in a moment of confidence, told Hume that to make a sensation it was necessary for a man of

* See Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont, vol. i. p. 233.

letters to gratify the appetite of the multitude for the marvellous. The gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome could excite wonder no more. The giants and sorcerers of the Middle Ages, with their dragons and spectres, enchanted castles and fairies dancing in the moonlight, valorous knights and rescued ladies, had also gone quite out of fashion. The marvellous in real life, the marvellous in manners, character, and situation, must be produced ; an author must exercise his inventive powers, and astound the world by moral paradoxes. This was Rousseau's method of making people stare at him ; and he found it perfectly answer. But it was unlucky for him that he did not keep it to himself, and still more unlucky that Hume betrayed his confidence to Burke ; the good David was off his guard ; he was in the presence of one who never forgot anything, and who laid this curious piece of information by, for use in the proper time and season. And it was used with terrible effect when the fireworks which the frenzied pyrotechnist had let off merely to dazzle for a moment the eye of the world, and, to gratify his own omnivorous vanity, began to be taken by millions of deluded worshipers for a galaxy of real stars, shining eternally in the heavenly firmament.*

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* Burke's Works, vol. iv. p. 291.

complete. With him, only a few hours before, Burke had been transacting a little confidential business. The patriot had secretly returned from his Parisian banishment, resolved to make his fortune. Powerful in the suffrages of the populace, he determined to extort a great place from such weak Ministers, who might naturally wish to pay any price to prevent the confusion and disturbance which the appearance on the scene of the outlawed editor of the *North Briton* and expelled Member for Aylesbury would naturally produce. Regal rancour and ministerial incompetence had turned the most worthless of human sinners into the most adored of political saints. The blow which had been aimed at him by the Royal hand had rebounded with formidable force ; and, at the violent stroke of the Monarch's sceptre, the vices of the most profane of worldly men had, in the eyes of the citizens of the Metropolis, been transmuted into the hallowed virtues of a martyr. It was not either for the honour of the King, or the interests of his kingdom, that the fierce passions of both sides should receive a new stimulant. The Government was so situated that it was necessary to submit to the extortion of a bad man. With Wilkes's demands, indeed, Lord Rockingham had too high a spirit, and too deep a sense of his duty as a Minister, to comply. But it was necessary to effect a compromise. A sum must be collected from the pockets of the Ministers,* and Wilkes induced by the boon to inflict on his country the grievous loss of his presence. His hideous features must no more be seen in public places, and he must betake himself again to the Continent. Burke, accompanied by Fitzherbert, is reported to have been the negotiator.

* Horne Tooke's Letter to Junius, of July, 31, 1771, and Wraxall's Historical Memoirs, third edition, vol. iii. p. 461.

Several conferences took place before the terms were finally arranged. Political morality of the highest kind, and political profligacy of the lowest, stood on the occasion facing each other in the tall manly form of Burke, with his grave countenance intent on getting rid of an abominable nuisance, and the repulsive figure of Wilkes, with his horrible squint and his impudent leer, as he greedily counted the guineas for which he had shamefully sold himself and his dupes.

The inherent difficulties of Lord Rockingham's position are clearly illustrated by this compromise. Wilkes had come to London as soon as ever he learnt that on the 22nd of April a resolution declaring general warrants illegal, had been carried. This was but one of a series of excellent measures which followed each other in rapid succession, and must have been heartily supported by Burke, though no record exists of the speeches he made on these various occasions.

The practice of dismissing officers from the army for their votes in Parliament was strongly discountenanced. The obnoxious tax on cider, which had brought on Lord Bute's Administration such a hurricane of unpopularity, was repealed, another duty substituted for it, and the manner of collection altogether changed. An Act of Indemnity was passed, to put at their ease those who had distinguished themselves in their resistance to the Stamp Act; but a requisition was also sent out to the American Assemblies to indemnify all who had suffered during the riots. The indiscriminate seizure of papers, which had appeared so arbitrary in the case of Wilkes, was condemned. An excellent commercial treaty was made with Russia. The Canadian bills were satisfactorily liquidated. The negotiation with Spain about the Manilla ransom,

which, amid the turbulence of domestic affairs, had been suffered to languish by the former Ministry, was revived and vigorously pressed. The most scrupulous purity pervaded every department of the State. No corruptions were practised ; no offices bartered ; no pensions given. Yet this was one of the weakest of Governments. At every moment Lord Rockingham was jealously traversed and opposed ; and some of the most powerful of his colleagues were intent on creating trouble and confusion. The Duke of Grafton suddenly resigned ; in giving his reason for this step he aimed an unfair blow at his remaining colleagues : and the hours of the Ministry were numbered.

No person was more sensible than Burke of the short span of official life which remained to his patron. He had chosen his part. Whoever might desert Lord Rockingham, there was one man who would at least be found true. He had no great place to relinquish ; he had little to sacrifice ; but that little was his all ; and the offering would be cheerfully made. Seeing that the Ministry was tottering to its fall, and that the mere credit of having held an important post even for ever a short time, gave a man an official air and an appearance of authority more than any other circumstance whatever could do, he felt desirous of obtaining the nomination to a high post which had just become vacant. He knew that he and his party were probably on the eve of a long minority, and that he would in all human probability have to resign this employment almost as soon as he should be appointed ; but he thought that as the situation of private secretary was of no recognized rank at all, and as he now stood forward as one of the ablest men in the House of Commons, his pretensions to the place he aspired to fill might be fairly allowed.

He consulted several friends, among whom was his old benefactor Dr. Markham. The divine thought the desire somewhat presumptuous, and such as it was not prudent to entertain. He seems not to have supposed that Burke was now in a very different position from what he had been, and that he had a right to extend his aims with his altered circumstances. What it might have been foolish in him to ask for, six months before, was now fairly his due. He was a person of the first importance. Dr. Markham advised him to moderate his endeavours to gaining a seat at the Board of Trade. But Burke could not at that time follow the reverend Doctor's advice, for the best of all reasons: there was no seat at the Board of Trade empty, and this other situation was. He never mentioned the subject to Lord Rockingham; and in a few days afterwards his official longings were set at rest by the summary dismissal of the Ministry.*

Burke's heart was filled with indignation at the manner in which Lord Rockingham was treated. His blood boiled within him at the arrogance and self-sufficiency which Pitt had displayed, the insulting answers he had returned to all Lord Rockingham's overtures, the unwarrantable efforts he had made to withdraw the party from its leader, and the little sympathy he had shown even for some of the great principles which Lord Rockingham had asserted.

It is impossible to excuse Pitt. He was jealous of Lord Rockingham. His pride and vanity had been wounded because a popular Government could be carried on without his co-operation. In the autumn of 1765, when he supposed that the young and inexperienced Whig statesmen were utterly unequal to their situation, that their Govern-

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 154.

bility, this manifest unfairness, any one who will take a just estimate of the question between Lord Rockingham and his successor, must even still experience a keen resentment at the wrong which Chatham inflicted on a statesman who had deserved from him, of all men, respect rather than insult.

What, then, must have been Burke's feelings at the time? It is not wonderful, surely, that from the moment when Lord Rockingham was displaced, he began to feel something very like hatred to the ardent Minister who had so much abused his popularity and his power; nor is it wonderful that, when he saw the blessed work of reconciliation and justice which Lord Rockingham and himself had striven to perfect, altogether destroyed by the folly, incompetence, and instability of the men whom Chatham had introduced into the Administration, that this burning sense of injury should have grown fiercer and fiercer within him, as he was compelled to suppress its outward manifestation. If he could allude to Pitt as he did in the April of 1765, before he had any thought of being associated with Lord Rockingham; as day after day and month after month the patriot's pride was seen overpowering all other considerations it may be easily understood how bitter, at last, when himself, his friends, and his country, all suffered from Chatham's passions, Burke's animosity must have become. Prudence obliged him to hide what was within his breast; but he encountered Chatham's scorn with a much nobler scorn; and nothing that Courts or Ministers had to bestow could, after what he had himself witnessed, have induced him to desert Lord Rockingham for his arrogant successor.*

* Walpole's George III., vol. ii. p. 378. Walpole says that the Duke of Grafton believed that Burke would have joined Chatham, had the

The retiring Minister, whatever might be his private feelings, acted most generously to the proud Earl. He interposed to prevent some of his followers resigning. He even advised Burke to accept a place in the new order of things. General Conway remained in office, and with him even William Burke. Great examples, therefore, and excuses fully sufficient, were ready, had Edmund been disposed to prefer his personal interests to his public principles. But he resolved to put himself out of the way of all the solicitations and intrigues which were then going on, by immediately leaving England.

Before he went, there was one thing needful to be done. It was necessary to set before the public, in as few words as possible, the plain history of the late Ministry. Burke saw that no eloquence, no artifice was required; the mere enumeration of the measures that had been carried, was the best panegyric on Lord Rockingham's Government. While the first murmurs against Pitt, for having accepted a peerage, were rising in the City, and while these first faint specks on the horizon were the unmistakable signs of the gathering of that storm in which his brilliant popularity was to be eclipsed, while the lamps which had been placed round the Monument for an illumination, were being taken down unused, and all the candles and fireworks which the shopkeepers had prepared to do honour to their favourite were being thrown aside, Burke wrote and published A Short Account of a Short Administration. In half a sheet he

new Ministers come up to his terms. But what the Duke of Grafton might believe, is one thing; what Burke would actually have done, another. His own words, and his conduct at the time, are quite at variance with the Duke of Grafton's supposition. The Duke could have known little of Burke after his Grace had left Lord Rockingham's Ministry, in May.

said all that a volume could have expressed.* Lord Rockingham, in this terse narration, is invested in his fall with a dignity which was wanting to his lofty enemy in his hour of triumph. It was not calculated to allay the tempest, of which the angry mutterings were growing louder and louder above the devoted head of Chatham, who seemed to have been smitten by Providence with madness, in order that his overweening pride should be rebuked, and his haughty spirit levelled with the dust. He might have taken warning from this brief manifesto. It was not enough merely to strike down Lord Rockingham for the moment. There were other Richmonds in the field.

A few days after this little piece had been published, a very extraordinary letter, in answer to it, appeared in *The Public Advertiser*. This communication bore the address of Cateaton-street, was signed by an individual of the name of Whittington, who represented himself as having carried on the business of a tallow-chandler for thirty years, as having been a Common Councillor for twelve, and as hoping, if the bell rang true, to be Lord Mayor of London before he died. Whittington had however taken his pen in hand to refute the silly author of a little silly publication, who had called the last Administration a short one, when it was easy to prove with a bit of chalk that this was as much as any Ministry had now a right to expect. From the 7th of October,

* Walpole's *George III.*, vol. ii. p. 257. Walpole's share in inducing General Conway to remain in office was not creditable to him, and he personally disliked Lord Rockingham. Yet even he says: "The services of the discarded Ministers were set forth in a small and well-written tract, called *A Short History of a Short Administration*. It did justice to their integrity, and it could not do too much. The nation felt and allowed their merit."

1760, to the 30th of July, 1766, there were five years, nine months, and thirty days, during which there had been no less than five Administrations; and a simple sum in short division would give one year and sixty days to each. How captious, then, was the author, to quarrel about forty days, which were all that the Rockingham Government wanted to complete the allotted span! How erroneous it was in him to say that the late Ministers came in under the mediation of the Duke of Cumberland, when everybody knew that they accepted office at their Sovereign's order; had therefore only the merits of pressed men, who might, as well as volunteers, be shot for desertion; and, according to military justice, might, without any claim to his Majesty's bounty, be whipped at any time out of his service! How spiteful against the Earl of Chatham, to say that Lord Rockingham and his friends were removed by a plan settled by this illustrious nobleman; and how inexpressive the word *settled* was of the real operation, when all were aware that the term *dictated* was that most consistent with the facts of the case and the noble Earl's character, as his quondam friend, E. T.,* had just published in his Enquiry! Had not this crony played bowman to the great commoner, at a banquet in the City, rising up and down like the Chelsea waterworks, for half an hour at a time, and now stood straight as a Maypole, refusing to bow either for him or to him, or sat skulking in a side box? In the first week of his administration Lord Chatham had shown both power and inclination to grant all sorts of favours. It was true that Lord Rockingham had, as the author declared, rendered the way smooth and easy to his successor; for, by leaving unemployed

* Lord Temple.

these stocks called reversions, he had left the wherewithal for his rival to grease his wheels. But professions of patriotism were, like treaties of peace, only binding until one of the contracting parties found himself strong enough to break them. The author had gone so far as to say that Lord Rockingham had left office at the express command of his Royal master, and implied that the King had dismissed him of his own accord ; but if the Minister's measures were good and popular, it was unjust to the Monarch to say he disliked them ; and his Majesty's behaviour to Lord Rockingham was, up to the moment of his dismissal, remarkable for the highest esteem and personal favour.*

This is fine satire. Chatham, Temple, and the King in succession pass in review, and a few keen strokes are directed at the points where, as is now generally admitted, they were the most vulnerable. There is an intimate knowledge of secret history displayed, such as Mr. Common Councillor Whittington could never have acquired, and the observations are expressed with a keen irony, to which the honest tallow-chandler, within the reach of Bow Bell, could by no possibility give the point. This inimitable weapon, so bright, so powerful, and of which the rust of a century has not blunted the edge, was forged in the true Vulcanian smithery, and gleams with an immortal radiance. It was, of course, the work of Burke himself. The internal evidence of authorship is much stronger than the mere fact of Whittington's letter being inserted in the Annual Register directly after the Short Account. The eyes of the philosophic statesman glare through the mask of the municipal tallow-chandler.

* Annual Register, 1766, p. 213.

CHAPTER XII.

1766-1767.

CHATHAM'S ENEMY.

AFTER sounding the note of defiance, Burke at once put the sea between him and the new Ministry. He left the political world in great distraction, and might rejoice to find himself far away from the actors in this scene of mad excitement. Some were coming in, some were going out, and some did not know whether to go or stay.

The respect of his countrymen followed Lord Rockingham into his retreat. He left London early in August; but, before he went, a deputation of six merchants had presented to him, on the part of the great commercial houses in the City engaged in colonial traffic, an address, drawn up with much propriety, in which they expressed their sense of the benefits he had conferred upon the Empire in the short but truly memorable period dignified by the noblest exertions of a patriot Ministry. When he entered York on the 17th of August, he was attended by nearly two hundred of the gentlemen of his county; and an address, similar to that which he had received from the merchants of London, was presented by the manufacturers of Leeds. These testimonies to Lord Rockingham's meritorious efforts have been carefully recorded by Burke in the chronicle of the An-

nual Register;* and the purest and most disinterested, if not the most brilliant of aristocratic statesmen, must have received exquisite pleasure from such unbought applause. His temper was as mild as ever; injustice had not soured it; ingratitude and insult had not hurried him to advise any violent resolutions. Amid his ancestral woods and pictures at Wentworth, that magnanimous pride and unruffled peace of mind, which never fail to attend in solitude the spirit conscious of well-doing, and which not unfrequently fly from the fierce contentions of courts and factions, were present with him, and contributed to restore a little health to a delicate constitution, that his ministerial labours had unhappily too much enfeebled.

Far different in the meanwhile was the fate of his successful competitor for power. Chatham's troubles were rising fast, and growing to such a magnitude as would have taxed the strength of Titans to overcome; and as his difficulties became daily greater, his power to meet them became daily less. The stream of popularity which had so long carried him triumphantly forward, making him master at once of Court and Parliament, was now ebbing with an appalling rapidity, and his mind had no longer its usual buoyancy to support him in such an emergency. With pride still at his heart, defiance on his brow, fever in his blood, the symptoms of mental aberration in his manners, he gazed wildly around him, and at last saw with horror that he who had been but yesterday as a beacon of safety to which all eyes instinctively turned, now threatened to be himself helplessly stranded, as a warning spectacle of irretrievable ruin in sight of the whole world.

* Annual Register, 1766, pp. 134-136.

Leaving him to be tortured by the furies he had himself excited, it is more pleasant to accompany Burke once more to Ireland. His beloved wife, who had been so true to him in all his adversity, who had soothed his cares, and encouraged him in his long struggle upward, was with him to witness his enthusiastic reception in the country of his birth, where his name had become a word of power. His brother Richard was also there. He had returned in ill health from Granada in the previous autumn on leave of absence for six months, after having had some serious disagreement with enemies whom Edmund termed a set of the greatest villains that ever existed.* Richard's leave must have been extended; for nearly twelve months had elapsed since his arrival in England; he had spent some time in Paris; and he seemed in no haste to return to Granada. He was proud of his brother, as he had good reason to be: he had exulted in Edmund's great success in Parliament; and was to share with him in the honours with which Ireland at length greeted the most illustrious of her sons.

All who had seen Burke for years drudging in Hamilton's service, were, of course, now ready to receive him with open arms. The distinguished part he had taken in the late session was known in Ireland; and people who saw, perhaps, little to respect in the humble friend of the late Secretary, could begin to perceive in Burke many admirable qualities, which, two years before, had not been to them at all apparent. He was no longer the jackal. He was now a greater man than his former patron. Yet, on his arrival in Dublin, where so many weary hours had been devoted to one who had shown

* New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 383.

himself so unworthy of such fidelity, every appearance of Viceregal dignity must have reminded him of the galling chain which he dragged no longer. The air he breathed could not but at first seem tainted with his old servitude. Could the same man, who now walked down the streets of his native city, the observed of all observers, and smiled on by every acquaintance, who recognized in him one of the master-spirits in the great English Parliament, have been, but a few months ago, regarded as a mere domestic attached for a consideration to Mr. Secretary Hamilton? It looked like a wild dream, and yet it was a simple reality. A mighty gulf separated the Edmund Burke of Lord Northumberland's Vice-royalty from the Edmund Burke of Lord Rockingham's Administration.

But it is, after all, a man's own relations who generally look with the smallest faith on his long wrestle with adversity, and are most astonished when the tide turns, and a great victory succeeds to what had seemed to them a mere hopeless toil. To some of the Irish Nagles on the Blackwater, the news that Edmund had been taken into confidence of the great Whig Lord Rockingham, and was a powerful champion of this nobleman's party, must have seemed as extraordinary as it did to Joseph's brethren, that he should have become so great a man in hostile Egypt. If Burke had not succeeded in becoming Prime Minister, they at least learnt that he had been made private secretary to the Prime Minister; and he had not been many weeks in office before they made haste to beg favours of him. What was the use of a nephew at Court, if he did not serve his own kinsfolk? With an unreasonableness thoroughly Irish, but not exclusively confined to Ireland, Burke, before Lord Rockingham's

Ministry had been four months in office, received a letter from his uncle Garret, requesting him to induce the Government, on his word alone, to suspend, in favour of an unfortunate relative, the operation of the laws ; and that, too, on the most unpopular of all questions. In his reply, Burke alluded to the efforts which malice and envy had made to ruin him, and showed at once how impolitic and unavailing any interposition on his part would certainly be.* His good uncle doubtless made allowances for his favourite nephew's delicate position, took his refusal in good part, and prepared to give him a cordial welcome when his engagements should permit him to come to the spot hallowed by so many associations of his childhood.

Having despatched a letter to Wentworth, showing to Lord Rockingham his zeal and fidelity, Burke was now ready, for a season, to bid adieu to politics. After so much labour he might surely enjoy a little relaxation. After so many years of obscurity he might for one brief hour bask in the sunshine of his fame as it was reflected in the kind glances of the friends who had known him from his earliest years. Richard Shackleton was not, of course, forgotten. He had, while engaged in his humble labours at Ballitore, heard of his school friend's sudden rise to eminence ; had learnt with indignation the calumnies which Burke's enemies had propagated against him ; and was ready, even unasked, to testify to the purity of his Protestant faith. As soon as he knew Burke was in Dublin, he wrote a letter inviting him to Ballitore, and also wishing to arrange a meeting at their friend Dennis's.† But Richard had become a little fretful with anxiety

* Letter, October 14, 1765. New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 185.

† Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 56.

lest his friend, since he had become a great man, might not think the pleasure of seeing him again a sufficient recompense for the journey, and had therefore thought fit to mention that he would have the opportunity of seeing some bishops and horse-races in the neighbourhood. "As to bishops," Burke answers, "you know they may be had for two a penny in a Parliament winter in Dublin. Horse-races I neither understand nor like."* He told Shackleton not to be civil and peevish at once, but to attribute his contemplated visit to the sincere affection which he entertained for all at Ballitore. Mrs. Burke would wear a white cap in compliment to Mrs. Shackleton, who would thus have the opportunity of indemnifying herself for the plainness of her dress by criticizing that of another lady. "So much for you, Mrs. Shackleton; I owe it to you," Burke playfully adds. The visit was soon paid, and with Burke's cordial greeting all Shackleton's transient ill-humour vanished.

The first weeks in October were spent at Loughrea. During the previous year Burke's only sister, Juliana, had married a Mr. French of that place, and the match was considered at the time a very advantageous one, though this gentleman afterwards met with severe pecuniary losses. As Mrs. French was now expecting her confinement, her mother had left Dublin for the occasion, and was attending upon her at Loughrea. When Burke with his wife and brother also arrived, there was quite a family reunion, and many happy days flowed delightfully away. The two brothers made an excursion to Galway, and the beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood. The bells rang a merry peal. The Corporation met shortly afterwards, and the freedom of the city was

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 109.

voted to Burke, and presented to him in a silver box. All the great people about Loughrea sought the society of the family, and the round of dinners and visits went on without end.

These things might be nothing to Burke. But to his poor mother, who had thus that most exquisite of all pleasures, the sight of her son's celebrity in her own eyes, they were much, very much. A letter, in which she displayed her feelings on the occasion, has been found, and printed among Burke's grave political correspondence.* The venerable old lady, when she thus poured out her heart to one of her friends in a gossiping epistle about her daughter's situation, Pat French's sheeting, the two courses at table, the coach and six horses, the troubles of Mrs. Burke, of Daran, who, for changing her condition at her time of life, was not to be pitied; and the crape gown, in which the correspondent appeared to Edmund's wife more respectable than any other lady she had met in Ireland; little imagined that her composition would one day make its appearance side by side with letters to and from great politicians and proud noblemen by whom the fate of empires were discussed. But it is the letter of a true woman and a true mother. The poor widowed lady who had seen so many of her children taken from her, long endured both sickness and sorrow, but before she left the world experienced the pure joy with which many kind and good mothers of eminent men have not been blessed, of seeing her son's glory acknowledged, says, with a not ungraceful simplicity, "My dear Nelly, I believe you will think me very vain; but as you are a mother, I hope you will excuse it. I assure you that it is no honour that is done him,

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 57.

that makes me vain of him, but the goodness of his heart, which I believe no man living has a better ; and sure there can't be a better son, nor can there be a better daughter-in-law than his wife.”*

Throughout Burke's whole life there was perhaps no period more tranquil than these weeks. Troubles and difficulties were behind him, troubles and difficulties were before him ; but a resting-place for the tired soldier was here for a moment afforded, so that those whom he loved best might gather around him, and refresh, with the most precious of all cordials, the heart that had been pierced by many a wound in the prolonged warfare against malice, envy, and ignorance. He was happy, and wished to see others happy. Even the longing eyes of a crowd of children round the outside of a country show appealed not in vain to his kind and sensitive nature.

An incident of this kind occurred one day in the market-place of Loughrea. As he was strolling through the town, and glancing at the miscellaneous vendible commodities that may be met with at an Irish fair, he was attracted to a theatrical booth, about which all the idle boys and girls in the neighbourhood were assembled. They had no money to purchase admission to the marvels inside, and could only gaze with envy on those who paid their pence, and entered to enjoy so splendid an exhibition. Burke was struck with this spectacle out-of-doors, and a pleasant idea occurred to him : he would treat all the children who were looking with such despairing eyes on the gaudy external attractions. The bargain was soon struck, and the little people rapidly disappeared within. Mr. French however and some of his friends came up before the operation was concluded,

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 111.

and his guest was caught by them in this amusing act of generosity. Mr. French, as host, desired to bear part of the expense; but Burke would hear of no such proposition. The gratification should be all his own. "No, no!" said he, with that gentle expression, which now and then passed over his face as he thought of that true philosophy in which there was not the slightest trace of cynicism, "This must be my own pleasure. I shall perhaps never again have the opportunity of making, at so small a cost, so many human beings happy."*

The day on which Burke took leave of his mother was a sad one. The good lady had other maternal anxieties. On the evening after the departure, Mrs. French was confined. After having just taken leave of her eminent son, whom she was never to see on this earth again, poor Mrs. Burke was watching at night over the birth of this little grandchild; and while her eyes were yet red with weeping for him who had gone from her, and every object reminded her of his presence, she had to tend her daughter, and wrap the new-born infant in swaddling bands. Thus does the wheel of human existence revolve, noiselessly but unceasingly, and the axle is ever wet with a mother's tears.

Burke was called to other scenes and occupations. He had yet to visit the banks of the Blackwater, and pay some little attention to the small property he had inherited from his late brother. He had carefully followed the directions of Garret's will, and in disposing of his favourite horses, had been particular in reminding the agent, even amid all the cares in preparing for the last session, to find them, as Garret had desired, kind masters. Even in the hurry and joy of his first election

* Prior, p. 98.

for Wendover, in December, he thought of Garret's steward, whom he understood to have been a favourite. He had recommended that the poor on the farm should be indulgently treated, and for one humble resident to whom Garret usually allowed at Christmas-time some malt, or some other small present, Burke did not neglect to have the same annual gift scrupulously provided. Another old man was to have a dozen of port-wine at Christmas, and an occasional bottle or two at other times.* Burke's uncle Garret at first managed the affairs of the estate for him, and collected the rents. But so much had Edmund felt for the poor in the village and parish connected with the property in the hard winter of 1765, that while he was himself suffering from the cold he had caught in going down to his election at Wendover, he gave his uncle full power to draw upon him, should he not have money in his hands, in order that, during so rigorous a season, the humble dependants on the land might be supplied with all necessaries.

How Garret Burke acquired the estate of Clohir cannot now be fully known. It was certainly not, however, as some persons have stated, in any respect hereditary property of the Burke family. Clohir originally appears to have belonged to a branch of the Nagles, and in consequence of the intricate operation of the penal laws, to have fallen into a state of great embarrassment, from which Garret Burke by a derivative purchase, subject to certain conditions, relieved the owners at their request, and with their complete satisfaction. Some complaint afterwards arose. One of the family, a Mr. Robert Nagle, instead of endeavouring to enforce the conditions, which he asserted had been evaded, went to Dublin,

* Letter in New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 384.

changed his religion, and by becoming a Protestant informer, infamously endeavoured to acquire to himself the whole interest in the property. His own family were in danger of being ruined by his proceedings, and strongly disapproved of his conduct. The case was tried at the time when the whole affair was recent, when all the witnesses were alive, when every circumstance attending the business must have been fully known ; and a decree of the Court of Equity decided in favour of Garret Burke. From that time he enjoyed peaceable possession of the estate until his death in 1765. Edmund inheriting the property, inherited also its responsibilities, which seem to have consisted in granting some leases on merely nominal terms to the old family, who still resided on the soil.*

Edmund took care to visit, in her small cottage, the mother of the Robert Nagle who had endeavoured to set aside the agreement entered into with Garret Burke, and who still threatened other lawsuits. The poor old woman deprecated the success of her son, as her own inevitable ruin. She was in very humble circumstances ; Burke kindly did all he could for her relief ; and she expressed herself much satisfied with his generosity. He also gave five guineas to O'Halloran, the old schoolmaster of Castletown Roche, who boasted of having first put a Latin grammar into his hands ; and so eager was Burke to welcome the village pedagogue, that he rushed down from his dressing-room with his beard

* It is impossible to speak with complete certainty on the circumstances through which Burke came into possession of Clohir. All that is to be known of the matter must be deduced from a letter, which he wrote on the subject, when threatened with some legal proceedings in the December of 1777. This letter has been published in the New Monthly Magazine, vol. xvi. p. 163.

but partly shaven, the lather on his face, and his neck quite bare.

Garret, the son of Burke's favourite uncle, had a strong passion for agricultural pursuits. Many of his plans of improvement were discussed with Edmund, who heartily sympathized with what to himself also was the most delightful of occupations. Uncle James, of Ballelegan, on the other hand, ridiculed his nephew Garret's schemes, blamed Burke for encouraging them, and railed at the two cousins, as old men and uncles sometimes will do. Burke spent three weeks in the neighbourhood, enjoying the society of his beloved uncles, and all the young members of the two families who had sprung up since he played round the knees of his mother's kinsmen, and had now become men and women, some with children of their own, and all pushing their way, with good or bad success, through the rugged pathway which at that time in Ireland lay before even the most honest and industrious of those who belonged to a proscribed religion and a subjugated race.

The holidays sped rapidly away. Parliament was summoned to meet, as was then usual, for the despatch of business, in November; and refreshed as he was by his vacation, Burke hastened across to Holyhead. The passage across the sea from Ireland to England was a stormy one, and all the little party suffered from sea-sickness. The journey by land, however, from Holyhead to London, was as pleasant as the voyage by water had been disagreeable.* On the 6th of November he sat down to inform his uncle of his safe arrival at home.

Lord Rockingham was in town, and, looking to

* Letter in New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 384.

Burke's pecuniary interests, again counselled him to accept office under Chatham. A place Burke had every reason to believe would be gladly given to him; but he determined, even against the Marquis's advice, not to shrink from this disinterested nobleman's side.*

The aspect of things had grown sufficiently gloomy. Neither at home nor abroad had Government that energy and command which Chatham had vainly hoped his mere name would inspire.

The harvest had been deficient all over Europe. A starving multitude could not feed on a statesman's vain-glory; and the gaunt spectre of famine first rose by the side of Chatham's gouty couch to rouse him from the delusion which years of prosperity and flattery had engendered. Dangerous riots broke out, which had to be quelled by the sword. The common prejudices against forestallers and regraters were excited, and to these prejudices Chatham's Government ministered by issuing, on the 11th of September, a proclamation for enforcing the antiquated laws, which had their origin in the darkness and ignorance of past centuries, against those who were supposed to engross the supply of corn in order to keep up the price of provisions. A fortnight afterwards another proclamation came forth, perhaps more efficacious for the immediate object; but also of more questionable legality.† This was an embargo on the exportation of corn, that, by the manner in which it was issued, at once raised a constitutional question of much importance. Instead of summoning Parliament at once, as is generally considered necessary when the executive, obeying the exigencies of the public service, ventures to over-

* Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

† Annual Register, 1767, p. 40.

step the limits of the law, the Government, as if it had done the most ordinary thing in the world, allowed the prorogation to extend until the usual time for transacting business.

A fiercer and more sordid spirit than that arising from hunger was called forth by Chatham from its den in 'Change Alley. The throne of the Great Mogul had become the spoil of a set of British adventurers. All the golden dreams which excited the imagination of the enterprising spirits in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, seemed to be suddenly realized in Hindostan. Fortunes were rapidly acquired. Underwriters became conquerors. The old nobility were outvied by the upstarts who every year returned with fortunes from the East. Yet the gains of the masters had not risen in proportion to the wealth of their servants. The proprietors quarrelled with the Directors; and the dissensions of the Company attracted the notice of the public. In this state were the affairs in Leadenhall-street when the new Ministry was arranged. The Court of Directors was soon informed that the Government intended inquiring into its proceedings. The right of the proprietors, it was reported, would be attacked, and even the Charter abolished.* Thus those who held property in the Company, and those who were dying of hunger in the streets, were equally arrayed against the lofty Minister; and a proud aristocracy, whom he was daily slighting, added their powerful ingredient of hatred to the cauldron which was fiercely bubbling up, and boiling over with augmenting toil and trouble.

There were other mortifications which even affected Chatham still more deeply. He had long been proud

* Annual Register, 1767, p. 40.

of his friendship with the King of Prussia. With inconsiderate haste, he no sooner found himself again in office than, without even consulting Sir Alexander Mitchell, the experienced English diplomatist at the Prussian Court, or asking whether such an appointment would be favourably received by the Empress Catherine, he chose an Ambassador Plenipotentiary to proceed to Russia, and to take with him credentials to his Prussian Majesty, with whom he was, on his way to St. Petersburg, to negotiate a triple alliance against the House of Bourbon. Both the Russian Empress and the Prussian King had other views, which it would have been well if Chatham had understood and endeavoured to counteract, instead of bringing forward a plan of foreign policy as unsuited to the times as, in his domestic policy, was his absurd proclamation against forestallers and regraters. The Russian troops were intersecting Poland, and would shortly invest Warsaw ; but the tendency of these events was quite hidden from the eyes of Chatham. Catherine was indeed ready to enter into a treaty of alliance with England ; but she insisted that it should contain a clause providing for the co-operation of England in a war with Turkey ; and such a war was even then impending. Frederic very properly said, that such a defensive alliance as Chatham proposed might, by rousing the jealousy of France and Spain, produce the evil against which it was intended to provide. Chatham was also told that the King of Prussia had no confidence in the stability of his Ministry. The Ambassadors the Prime Minister had appointed, lingered in England instead of proceeding to their respective Courts ; and all the foreign relations of the empire were, in fact, suspended.

These things were not hidden from the glance of Burke, who with the burning sense of wrong within him, was waiting for the few days to elapse before the session would begin. The great Minister, too, had withdrawn himself from the House of Commons, where his ascendancy had been so powerful. He had thus, by leaving the field open to all competitors, done Burke a service. Whom had he reason to fear? Not the weak Conway, surely, who was to lead the ministerial forces: not the fickle Charles Townshend, whose ability was only equalled by his levity: not the desponding Grenville, who had but one idea, and by its constant repetition with unmerciful prolixity, had fairly wearied out the House, and could now scarcely command attention.* Perhaps Burke may be pardoned, if, after calculating all chances, and making himself fully acquainted with the situation, something whispered within him that a great opportunity was open, that the House of Commons wanted a master, and that he was the man of the future. A blow might be dealt even at the towering crest of the exalted statesman, who thought himself invulnerable; it might be possible to shake him on his lofty pedestal; and, amid the dark clouds which were forecasting ruin and desolution, and entirely blinding Chatham's eyes, there might be one resolute arm outstretched to launch the thunderbolt of vengeance.

Parliament met on Tuesday, the 11th of November. Lord Rockingham, by the admission of his opponents, acted with a moderation seldom displayed by a politician who had been ignominiously expelled from office by men who loudly praised his policy, and had not succeeded in forming a stronger Government than that which they

* Grenville's Diary, August 16, 1766.

could only blame for being weak. Burke, whose influence depended on his displaying as much ability in attack as he had done in defence, spoke on the first day very finely, but also with much gentleness.* Even Lord John Cavendish, who was the keenest and most uncompromising of the old Whig party, and who had led the way in retiring from the new Government, was unusually forbearing and dignified in his language. A wise Minister would have paid any price for the support of men who, when heated by many injuries, could act with such rare magnanimity. But Chatham was bent on rushing to destruction. Because Lord Edgecumbe, a man of forty-five years of age, and a distinguished naval officer, did not think fit to exchange his post of Treasurer of the Household for that of a Lord of the Bed-chamber, the Minister was prepared, rather than yield to such a trifling proposal, to see all the members of Lord Rockingham's party who still remained in office, at once retire into opposition. Lord Rockingham had patiently endured much; but the bounds of patience were fast being overstepped. To forbear much longer would not be magnanimity, but, after such manifold wrongs, mere poverty of spirit.

On the question of the indemnity for those who had advised and enforced the embargo, Burke argued the constitutional question with much ability. There was, however, nothing bitter in his language, and no resemblance between the tone of his party and that which was led by Grenville, who was eager to go all lengths in opposition.† There was hitherto in his speeches no invective, no sarcasm. When, however, on the 25th of

* Walpole's George III., vol. ii. pp. 373, 374.

† Grenville Papers, vol. iii. p. 347.

November, Alderman Beckford, as the mouthpiece of Chatham, who thought fit to forget the existence of his colleagues in the House of Commons, moved for a committee to inquire into the state of the East India Company's affairs, Burke rose first in opposition, commented strongly on the disorganized condition of the Ministry, and called on the House to protect the right of property which it was the duty of Parliament to shield from all attacks.*

He had thrown down the gauntlet, and there was no Minister to take it up. All his weapons were then displayed in succession: argument, invective, raillery, sarcasm; and neither Conway nor Townshend had anything to say in reply to their merciless assailant. Two days after he had declared war in earnest, several of Lord Rockingham's friends, Lord Monson, Lord Besborough, Lord Scarborough, and the Duke of Portland, resigned the places they had continued to hold under Chatham; and the breach between the Rockingham party and the Administration was complete. Burke every day became fiercer in his attacks. It was in vain that the Court trusted to its majorities, and Chatham to his great name; their remorseless antagonist was never at rest, and the ministerial ranks began to waver. The method in which Burke made his assaults was perhaps more annoying to the Ministers in the House of Commons than the most violent declamation could have been. He professed to treat them with a contemptuous tenderness. They were not to be so much blamed as pitied. Why look to them for information? They knew nothing, and could be expected to know nothing. Their modesty was surely very becoming: they nominally filled offices, but they knew

* Walpole's George III., vol. iii. Annual Register, 1767, p. 42.

very well that their advice was not wanted ; and that to their great leader must be left all the real work of the Government.

On the 9th of December, the City Alderman who had superseded the nominal Ministers, brought forward a motion to inspect the Company's papers. Though he gave no definite idea of what was intended, he left it to be understood that a great plan was about to be brought forward to convert, to the advantage of the nation, the immense fund of wealth which now only invited extortion and oppression. The Ministers of the Crown were as much in the dark as to the details of what was really proposed as the independent Members of the House ; and though they might make a feint of answering the arguments of the Opposition, could not develope the scheme which was provoking so much animosity, and causing dismay in those who were anxious to see vested interests and the national credit most religiously maintained.

Burke rose and denounced with much energy the disgraceful manner in which the business of administration was conducted. After showing the pernicious effect which a measure introduced with so much haste and violence might have on the credit of the country, he seemed to recollect himself, and asked what was the use of arguing in the House of Commons? Instead of reasoning, it would be better to have recourse to supplication. The great person who alone could give relief was far beyond their range of vision. Burke, who was sitting behind the Treasury Bench, went on to say, pointing to Conway and to Townshend, "The greatest Integrity and the greatest Ability cannot gain access to this Invisible Being before whom Thrones"—and here at every word he

waved his arm over the Ministers — “Dominations, Prinedoms, Virtues, Powers, all veil their faces with their wings.” But though arguments could not reach him, prayers might. Burke then solemnly apostrophized the Great Minister who ruled and governed them all. “Have mercy upon us,” prayed the orator. “Do not destroy the work of thine own hands. Have mercy on the public credit, of which thou hast made so free and so large a use. Doom not to perdition that vast public debt, a mass, seventy millions of which thou hast employed in rearing a pedestal for thy own statue.” Here a stupid Member, who had no relish for irony, called Burke to order, much to the regret of the great majority who were roaring with laughter. “Sir,” replied Burke, “I have often suffered under the persecution of order, but did not expect its lash while at my prayers. I venerate the Great Man, and speak of him accordingly.”*

Conway in his reply showed how keenly he felt Burke’s satire, and how mortified he was with the treatment he received from Chatham. The next day the Earl was himself fiercely attacked in the House of Lords by the Duke of Richmond, who told him to his face that the English nobility would not be browbeaten by an insolent Minister. The impracticable statesman found that his frowns, nods, and mimic lightnings had no terrors for the aristocracy. He found that his popularity was gone, and that in presence of the difficulties he had brought upon himself, his credit for statesmanship was fast going. He never, during the time he still continued in office, showed himself in Parliament after that day; but became, as

* Chatham Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 145. Walpole, vol. ii. p. 407.

Walpole remarks, what Burke had satirically said he was only a few hours before, literally inaccessible and invisible.*

Thus ended the year 1766. Lord Rockingham's late private secretary was standing forth as the ablest and most prominent member of the Opposition. When we observe what a parliamentary reputation Burke had acquired, and how his name was mentioned with so much honour throughout the world, it seems scarcely credible that twelve months had barely elapsed since the time when he was first chosen a Member of the House of Commons. Not only were the eyes of England turning upon him, but, as was even more grateful to his generous heart, oppressed and degraded Ireland was already beginning to look to him as the son whose filial mission it was to be the principal champion for effecting her great deliverance.

A Member brought forward a motion to prohibit strictly the importation of Irish wool. This was only in the original spirit in which hitherto all legislation relating to Ireland had been conceived. But Burke took up the cause of his country, and putting himself in the front rank of opposition to this foolish proposal, produced a great effect on the House by a powerful speech, and caused the motion to be promptly rejected by a great and decisive majority.† Ireland soon learned who it was that thus stood forth in her defence; and the freedom of his native city was, in the February of 1767, transmitted by the Mayor of Dublin to Burke, as an acknowledgment of his endeavours. In thanking the

* Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. ii. p. 411.

† Letter of Lord Charlemont : Chatham Correspondence, vol. iii.

Mayor for this honour, Burke wrote, that however humble his efforts might be, his friends could not overrate his intentions for the welfare of Ireland.*

He had just received another testimony of regard, perhaps even still dearer to him than this mark of respect from the Corporation of Dublin. Finding that Conway was every day separating himself further from the Rockingham party, William Burke unhesitatingly resigned his situation as Under Secretary ; and thus to encourage Edmund to persevere in opposition, gave his own interest the stab.† The ascendancy which Burke had acquired over his connections, and the veneration which they showed to him in all circumstances, are not the least remarkable nor the least pleasing features in his private history. He stands as the great central figure of a family group, in which every other member, his wife, his father-in-law, his brother Richard, and his distant relative, William, bend reverently towards him, and gaze affectionately upon him. To their numerous detractors their household might seem only the residence of some pushing political adventurers, of whom Edmund was himself the most brilliant ; but few knew how much domestic affection, how much true virtue, how many amiable qualities had chosen their home under Burke's humble roof in Queen Anne-street. He said himself that every care vanished as soon as he crossed his own threshold.‡ Wearied and irritated, as he frequently was, on leaving the House of Commons, his brow became smooth, and his mind resumed its equanimity, as soon

* Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 58.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 158. "To encourage me, he gave his own interest the stab : *Pæte non dolet.*"

‡ Annual Register, 1797.

as he was welcomed, on his returning home, by the smiles of those who were so dear to him, and to whom he was so dear.

His anxieties about the members of his family were indeed so sincere that one important day during this session, when Grenville made a violent motion on American affairs, and a great speech was expected from Burke, he was observed to be restless and agitated. His brother had met with a serious accident : he had broken his leg ; and Edmund was so much alarmed at the danger of poor Dick, that he was quite unable to control himself so as to make a speech even on a question in which he took so much interest and had such strong convictions.* But neither his affection for his relatives, nor his devotion to the interests of his party, enticed him out of the path of conscious rectitude in which at all hazards he was resolved to tread.

Before Christmas, some appearance of a Government had at least been maintained. But the disorganization and disunion had grown greater every day ; and when Parliament met after the holidays, such a spectacle as the ministerial benches afforded had never before been seen. Conway was disgusted. Charles Townshend, who had always been kept in awe by Chatham, was on the point of breaking loose from all control ; and the House of Commons, as is always the case in similar circumstances, was becoming unruly. Rigby, Wedderburne, and Grenville saw their opportunity ; and all the forces of the Opposition, under their skilful management, combined in one unscrupulous assault on the undisciplined ministerial corps. The land-tax, though one of the most valuable sources of the revenue, was naturally very much

* Letter to Flood, from Lord Charlemont.

disliked by the country gentlemen. It had been at the rate of four shillings in the pound during the war, and had not yet been diminished. Grenville, while at the head of the Government, had thrown out, as was usual with him, some vague hopes that at a future time this tax might be reduced to three shillings. When Townshend made the proposition to continue it at the rate it had for so many years remained, Dowdeswell proposed that one shilling in the pound should then be taken off. This motion was supported by all the distinguished members of the Rockingham party. It was carried by a majority of eighteen votes; and for the first time in the memory of that generation the Government was defeated on a great financial question. Such a victory however did those who gained it no honour; for it was contrary to every principle of sound policy, and might have produced most pernicious consequences on the public securities.

But in that majority Burke's name is not to be found. Though the motion was made by his friend Dowdeswell, and the debate in support of it concluded by his other friend, Lord John Cavendish; yet he strongly disapproved of this proposition, and in the most marked manner absented himself from the division. Hating each other, both the Rockinghams and the Grenvilles were furious against the man upon whose support they had counted, and who had dared to act upon his own opinions. They threatened to ostracize him; but this mere Irish adventurer, as he was opprobriously called, wavered not, and resolutely defended in his place the course he had thought it his duty to take. "Having," said he, "been warned by the ill effect of a contrary procedure in great examples, I have taken my ideas of

liberty very low, in order that they may stick to me, and that I may stick to them to the end of my life.” *

His opposition to the Government on every just ground, was in no respect diminished in vigour. Townshend had, very soon after Parliament re-assembled in January, given some hints of his intentions to raise an American revenue. On the 13th of May he made a grave and business-like speech, in remarkable contrast to his usual sparkling and effervescent oratory, and especially to a dashing harangue he delivered a few evenings before, in a fit of mad excitement when he was supposed to be under the influence of champagne. He moved that the Assembly of New York should be suspended for disobedience, declared the right of taxation indisputable, and introduced a plan for taxing in America such articles as glass, paper, painters’ colours, and tea. Burke condemned all Townshend’s resolutions, and still thundered against Chatham. The whole plan, he said, was weak. What could be more futile than the idea of dissolving assemblies, when the execution of such a measure depended on their acquiescence, and implied a corresponding power? To suspend all laws was punishing the innocent and increasing the popularity of the guilty. If New York was disobedient, why not make a local tax on the importations of that province alone? “ You will never,” said he, “ see a single shilling from America. It is not by votes, it is not by angry resolutions in this House, but by a slow and steady conduct that America can be reconciled to Great Britain.” †

* Compare Burke’s collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 35, with the passage in his Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs (Works, vol. iv. p. 417); and also with Walpole’s Memoirs of George III., vol. ii. p. 421.

† Cavendish Reports, vol. i. p. 39.

His opposition was all in vain. His solemn prophecy was not regarded. Merrily and blindly did Charles Townshend, and all who voted with him, reverse Lord Rockingham's policy, and brave the dangers of the unknown future. Like a troop of Bacchanalians, dancing and singing, reeling and rioting, with pipe and cymbal they passed gaily on, while the storm was gathering above their heads. One man stood apart from the giddy crowd, and with anxious eyes and a deep presentiment of impending evil written on every line of his grave countenance, watched the driving clouds which were the forerunners of the coming tempest. Yet a short three months, and Charles Townshend would be no more; his cap and bells would be thrown aside; the ready tongue, which mimicked everything, would be quite silent; the ready wit, which delighted all who came within its influence, would be for ever extinguished; and while his body was mouldering to dust, a successor would fill his post in the Government, inherit his errors, carry out his policy, and see a great empire rent asunder. The thoughtless laugh and the irrepressible gibe of this unprincipled but witty spirit, seem yet to re-echo among the ruins and desolation which were produced by his giddiness and folly.

While thus employed in sowing the seeds of discord between England and America, Townshend was at the same time busily engaged in stockjobbing. Chatham's plan of Indian reform had fallen to the ground; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was trading in Indian Stock. Burke has himself, indeed, been accused of engaging in the same traffic; but there is no evidence to support this scandal; and a sentence which he wrote some time afterwards, to a Prussian gentleman who had

asked his advice on some investment of this nature, cannot be controverted. "I have never," he writes, "had any concern in the funds of the East Indian Company, nor have taken any part whatsoever in its affairs, except when they came before me in the course of parliamentary proceedings."*

Sixty Members of Parliament were however at this time really concerned in these speculations. Both William and Richard Burke had begun to deal largely in such funds, and at that time made a great deal of money, which they afterwards lost. In this manner Edmund's name became associated with theirs in the same transactions. It was well known in the House of Commons that William Burke was trading deeply in these securities. A measure was introduced before the Session ended, to restrain the Company from making dividends. This Bill, which passed through both Houses, and became a law, was certainly a most questionable exercise of legislative power; for it was actually preventing people from disposing of their own property. In the discussions upon it, William Burke avowed himself a proprietor of East Indian Stock, and justified the vote he had given in that capacity, for making the recent dividend which had much displeased the majority of the House, and occasioned this restricting Bill.†

William had none of Edmund's ability as a parliamentary speaker, though he was not destitute of a certain weight in the House of Commons. He was a good man of business. He had the reputation of writing many keen satires on the political opponents of his

* Letter to a Prussian Gentleman. Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 98. See also a note by Sir Dennis Le Marchant, in Walpole's George III., vol. ii. p. 346.

† Walpole's George III., vol. iii. p. 22.

friends, and had undoubtedly considerable literary talents. He had not however much tact in his intercourse with the world; and many people who were compelled to submit to the supremacy of Edmund's genius, were not inclined to pay the same deference to William. Those who were jealous of the Burkes said that William had all Edmund's presumption, and little of his ability.*

But whatever might have been his motives, William Burke's resistance to the Dividend Bill was right. It was strongly opposed in the House of Lords by so high an authority as Lord Mansfield, and his arguments were not refuted. Burke wrote a protest against it for the Rockingham peers, and it had the honour of being revised by this great legal luminary.* As it now appears in the Journals of the House of Lords, it reads most ably and unanswerably. It was probably the first composition of the kind that came from Burke's pen; but it was not the last.

From this time until the death of Lord Rockingham, it was considered Burke's especial province to write the protests for his party. Whenever an important measure was passing, which Lord Rockingham and the Duke of Richmond disapproved, Burke's literary services were always in request to condense the arguments against such objectionable legislation. "Burke, we want a protest,—Burke, we want two protests:" such was the tenour of many hurried notes, written sometimes in ink and sometimes in pencil, that, in the midst of his own labours in the House of Commons, he was in the habit of receiving from the House of Lords. He would immediately step aside and draw up, with all the ready force, elegance, and perspicuity of his style, the expected

* Walpole, vol. iii. p. 59.

paper. To write off-hand a good protest is not so easy a task as it may at first sight appear. It is to compress the largest possible amount of argument in the smallest possible compass. To a man of Burke's habits of mind, such a labour might seem peculiarly difficult; for there was no space for amplification, nor for illustration. These compositions are on record; they may be read in the Parliamentary History; and it is much to be regretted that some of those which are undoubtedly his, have never been thought worthy of being added to his works. Many of them are most eloquent summaries on the points in dispute, and are at once dignified, forcible, luminous, and impressive. To the powerful protest against the Dividend Bill, the names of nineteen peers were attached.*

At last this session was brought to a close on the 2nd of July. It was considered one of the longest that had yet been known: Parliament had sat, with little interruption, for nearly eight months. Whatever enthusiasm Burke might have had at the commencement of the sitting must have been completely extinguished at its close. He thought it extremely tedious, and doubtless saw its termination with joy.† Little had been done; a great political reputation had been sacrificed; and no man knew where to look for the responsible Minister. A compromise extending over two years had at length been concluded between the Crown and the East India Company; but the great question was left quite unsettled. American taxation had been revived. The House of Commons had shown in its dealings with the Indian business a spirit not only to declare, but to

* Parliamentary History, vol. xvi. p. 353.

† Annual Register, 1767.

make the law. The Government was in the greatest confusion. Lord Rockingham had indeed been avenged; but this personal triumph gave no consolation either to himself or to Burke, as they sadly anticipated the calamities impending over the nation. The noblest monuments of legislation and patriotism which they had bequeathed to their successors, had been wantonly defaced with a barbarous malignity only to be compared with that of the evil elf of the fairy tale who delighted in destroying the good which she envied, but could herself neither effect nor appreciate.

CHAPTER XIII.

1767-1769.

IN THE FORLORN HOPE OF POLITICIANS.

CHATHAM's Ministry was at an end. It had expired, not from the effects of the fierce blows inflicted by its enemies, but from that slow political euthanasia which is perhaps the least honourable of all the deaths that Governments can die. The Duke of Grafton became, not only in name but in reality, first Minister; and the measures of this young nobleman, while occupying his eminent and responsible position, were at once unconstitutional, arbitrary, undignified, and disgraceful. Chatham's genius was in eclipse; a time of faction and violence was at hand. Some dreary years are to follow. All the ordinary lights of political navigation will be extinguished, and the only cheering sign in the dark expanse will be the dazzling radiance which shall brighten on the crest of the Member for Wendover, as he contends against powerful majorities, and amid every kind of violence and contumely, for the constitutional rights of electors, and for the liberties of the press. This part of Burke's life has been little studied. It is only recently that materials for a consistent and intelligible account of it have been accessible; it will however be found most memorable, not only for the spirit which directed it, and the principles it asserted, but also for the great results

that it obtained. Few of those, who every morning peruse at breakfast the debate of the previous night in the House of Commons, criticize every act and word of their representatives, and witness the newspapers diffusing political information over the length and breadth of the land and to the most remote extremities of the British dominions, think with what ardour and with what courage, under what ridicule and under what reproach, these inestimable privileges of free reporting and free discussion, which we now regard as the basis of all our other liberties, were secured to us principally by Burke, not yet a century ago.

The first open acknowledgment by Ministers that their idol had lost its potency, and had completely ceased to be feared, occurred as soon as the session was over. Negotiations were commenced with Lord Rockingham. But the King's insincerity, Conway's vacillation, the Duke of Grafton's selfishness, Grenville's obstinacy, and Horace Walpole's meddling, prevented any just arrangement from being made. A treaty has little chance of being satisfactorily concluded when none of the parties at the conferences wish its success; and such was the case in the overtures made indirectly to the high-minded chief of the new generation of Whigs. Lord Rockingham might justly fear to advance on ground which he knew to be mined beneath his feet. He was young, and had profited by the experience of the last twelve months. He saw the prostrate corpse of his haughty and impracticable rival at his feet, and could take warning from the fate of Chatham. Determined that neither himself nor his party should be made the victim of courtly insincerity, he would not again accept office without those full securities which the King was not prepared to give. Had

he thought it right to abandon America to Grenville, he might indeed have forced himself upon the Sovereign; but here again Lord Rockingham's steady integrity was not to be shaken from the lofty height on which it was enthroned. Considering his party as a forlorn hope in the mere struggle for place, but also as the repository of great principles which would one day produce mighty consequences, he firmly opposed himself both to the obstinacy of Grenville and the obstinacy of George III.; and without a sigh, on the rupture of the negotiations, left town for Yorkshire.*

A noble Marquis, with more than twenty thousand pounds a year, could of course easily resist the mere pecuniary inducements of ministerial life. But to Burke, who was so poor, as office again receded from his view, such conduct might reasonably have appeared, as it did to some of Lord Rockingham's greater friends; somewhat too scrupulous. This was, however, far from being the fact. He sank himself and his own personal interests in his zeal for his patron's cause; and on the 1st of August wrote a lively letter to Lord Rockingham, from Parson's Green, congratulating him on having escaped so creditably from the artful toils which had been so dexterously laid.† The Duke of Richmond, young, restless, and ambitious, and the Duke of Newcastle, old, feeble, and visibly sinking into the grave, were however

* "You know," writes Lord Rockingham to Dowdeswell, "I never disguised to my friends that I considered them a forlorn hope, but that the maintenance of character and credit was in honour incumbent upon them, and would in the first place be a comfort to their own minds; and though it might appear improbable at present, yet it was not impossible that such conduct might ultimately prove the best policy."—Cavendish, vol. i. p. 585.

† Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 67.

of another opinion. Both were eager for office, and regretted the opportunity which had been thrown away. As Burke was now quite famous, he was honoured with requests from these high aristocratic personages, to spend a few days at Goodwood and Claremont. He accepted these invitations; but, still keeping the interests of Lord Rockingham steadily in sight, communicated to him the result of his observations. The Duke of Richmond was uneasy and anxious. It would be necessary for the Marquis to write to his Grace occasionally. The witty Lord Chesterfield's death was expected; and Burke thinks not of the many accomplishments which would expire in the person of this veteran leader of fashion, but of the vacancy which would occur in the representation of Buckinghamshire. So wags the world, and so intensely political had Edmund now become. The Duke of Newcastle writes to him, thanks him for his society, and even conveys to him the compliments of the Duchess.*

Burke also paid a visit to Wentworth during the autumn. He set out for the North, heavily laden with a cargo of politics from his Grace of Newcastle, the Earl of Albemarle, and the Duke of Richmond. He was beginning to be regarded universally as Lord Rockingham's most confidential friend; and all who desired to know the Marquis's thoughts, or had anything to communicate to him in return, anxiously sought out Burke, whom they knew to be the most zealous and the most efficient of go-betweens. His whole soul was in the work. His very existence seemed to depend on the success of Lord Rockingham and his friends. To some of these great noblemen such disinterested enthusiasm was quite

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 73.

incomprehensible. Such ardour they had never seen before in their exalted sphere, where the cold increases in proportion to the rarity of the atmosphere. They looked with jealousy and suspicion on the earnest efforts of their humbler associate. They could not but believe that a man who apparently laboured with so much indefatigable energy in a cause for which they scarcely thought it worth while to put off a fox-hunt, or take a disagreeable drive in winter, must have covertly in view some strong selfish motive; and frequently while he was exhorting them in animated language to persevere and keep together, he would encounter the dark glance of distrust, and the supercilious sneer of aristocratic impertinence.* He was, however, still young, and might look confidently forward.

He was probably at Wentworth when Charles Townshend died. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's death was neither a loss to the Ministry nor a gain to the Opposition. His vanity and fickleness had disgusted all parties; and no other eminent politician, called away like him so suddenly, in the early summer of his life, ever departed so little regretted. But from Burke's path another rival had been removed; in wit, as in the more sterling qualities of genius, he must now be regarded as without an equal or a competitor in the House of Commons.

Two or three weeks after Townshend's decease, his noble brother, who was eminent, not for his political abilities, but for his love of the bottle and his skill in hitting off caricatures, two accomplishments which he turned to account in his new employment, was about to set out for his Government as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The distracted state of the Ministry was very

* Letter to Fox, October 8, 1777.

happily ridiculed in a satire published in the Public Advertiser. It was called the Grand Council, and professed to detail the deliberations of the Cabinet on Irish affairs. The Ministers are assembled at the house of Lord Shelburne, to give instructions to the new Lord Lieutenant. A chair is vacant for the Prime Minister, who is stated to be absent at Newmarket. Lord Northington is represented as tipsy and sleepy ; Conway as Caution without Foresight ; Lord Shelburne as Mala-grida the Jesuit, simpering, and smiling on his colleagues ; Lord Camden as always appealing to natural right and the common law, and as knowing no medium between anarchy and tyranny.* This was a clever dramatic sketch, and not without much truth in its satire. It gave great offence to Conway and the other Ministers whom it ridiculed, and was at the moment believed to have been written by Burke.

One of their adherents attempted to reply to it by giving a true narrative of what was said at the Council. Burke is introduced into it as "a tall, ill-looking fellow, in a shabby black coat," holding in one hand a paper, in which the plan of politics decided upon by the Opposition is drawn out, and in the other this satire of the Grand Council. He offers the Ministers the olive-branch or the sword. His proposals are scornfully rejected by the virtuous Cabinet, and he is led out of the room by two footmen.† This reply, though very poor, is to us, as showing what were the ideas of Burke entertained by the dependants of the Ministry, not destitute of a certain degree of interest. His abilities are recognized almost with fear ; but such persons could not of course be expected to appreciate those nobler qualities of

* Woodfall's Junius, vol. ii.

† *Ibid.*

integrity and disinterestedness, to which nothing in their own hearts could respond. Abuse from such quarters was an honour: their praise only could have been damnable.

They were on the wrong scent. The Grand Council was not the composition of Burke. The powerful anonymous writer, who, under the name of Junius, was to kindle such a flame, afterwards avowed himself the author of this satire,* and he had already begun to send contributions to Woodfall. While his celebrated sketch of the Cabinet was ascribed to Burke, this author, curiously enough, actually did shortly afterwards appropriate to himself an able speech of Burke, and which Mr. Woodfall's correspondent published as an oration of his own, spoken in a political club.

The session opened languidly. Corn was still very dear, and the weather very bad; but the struggle of political parties seemed by mutual consent to be deferred until after the general election, which was to take place in the spring. The legislators of St. Stephen's were all looking to the future, and thought little of the present. The engines of corruption were being furbished up; the traffic in boroughs was shamelessly carried on; and the sufferings of the poor in an inclement season, and with bread at an extravagant price, were little regarded by the expiring Commons:

There was however one exception. Burke was at his post on the first night of the Session, and spoke with great ability and success on the topic which the mere politician of the hour thought unworthy of his attention. He dwelt on the high price of food, and threw out hints of those ideas which he expressed nearly thirty years after-

* Grenville Papers, vol. iv.

wards in his *Thoughts on Scarcity*.* His wit was keen, his pathos affecting, his warning impressive. This speech is the first that has come down to us properly reported, and exhibits his oratory in much of its beauty and vigour. His orations being always of a much higher quality than the mere manufactured parliamentary eloquence which is handed down from generation to generation, and passed from speaker to speaker without addition or subtraction, render the study of his career in the House of Commons of quite a peculiar interest and value. He might be right, or he might be wrong, but he was never the mere parliamentary debater. His Majesty had regretted the high price of corn, and recommended the subject to the attention of the Legislature. Yet the Government had nothing to say, no plan of relief to propose, and Lord North, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, could only state that Charles Townshend had had some scheme in view, but that it had died with him, and that the Ministers knew nothing at all about it: he contented himself with pronouncing a laboured panegyric on his predecessor. The Commons were recommended to deliberate on the dearness of corn; but the Government did not offer to guide their deliberations. What, said Burke, was this but throwing the whole responsibility on Parliament, and by raising hopes which must be disappointed, directing by a high recommendatory authority the resentment of the people against their inoffensive representatives? When a monarch's voice cried, Havoc! would not riot, confusion, and rebellion follow? Men in the last extremity of distress would be driven to madness, and the bloody assistance of a military hand be

* Walpole's *George III.*, vol. iii. p. 113. *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvi. p. 386.

called in to maintain order, and enforce obedience to the law.*

This prophecy was only too speedily accomplished. In a few months riot and confusion did make rapid progress, and the hand of the soldier was indeed stained in the blood of the citizen. The paragraph in this speech relating to the dearth, was however thought so strong, that it was suppressed in the fictitious report published by Woodfall. The standing orders were, during this session, so rigorously enforced, that this is the only speech of which any report has been preserved. The Commons, in proportion as their servility to the Crown increased, were anxious to hide their shame from the eyes of the people. Corruption can only be supported by ignorance. Every means was now used to keep the multitude uninformed of what was being done by those who pretended to speak in their name.

They were right. The negotiation which was on the point of being concluded with the Bedford party, to engage them in the service of the Government, shows to the core the rottenness of the system which was then in fashion. These honest politicians made not the slightest pretence of any public principle. They wanted good places, and when they had obtained them they were satisfied. They disdained even to be hypocrites. A motion to inquire into the state of the nation of which one of their party had given notice, was only suspended during the progress of the negotiations, was loudly trumpeted in the ears of the Ministers when the conferences were likely to come to an unsatisfactory termination, and was only finally given up when all was happily

* Collected Speeches, vol. i. p. 4. Parliamentary History, vol. xvi. p. 386.

arranged, and when of course the nation had suddenly become in a most flourishing condition, because Gower, Sandwich, Weymouth, and Rigby had given all the advantages of their moral characters and political abilities to the Administration, in return for the most solid considerations of great offices and high salaries.* With the conclusion of the negotiations ended the political career of John, fourth Duke of Bedford, a distinguished nobleman, whose misfortune it was to be the respectable leader of the most disreputable band of politicians ever known. To mention separately the members of this faction, is at the same time to mention the most immoral public men of the eighteenth century. They were indeed nothing better than a set of rapacious and drunken profligates, without a principle, without a scruple, without delicacy, without shame. In contrast to them, when the members of the Rockingham party are enumerated, the men of the highest integrity during their time pass directly before the mind. William Dowdeswell, Sir George Savile, Lord John Cavendish, the Marquis of Rockingham, and last, but not least, Edmund Burke himself, would have reflected honour on any age, and their steady virtues shine like fixed stars amid the dim waste in which they lived.

At this time one statesman, and but one, out of the Rockingham party can be said to have had a settled principle, either of government, or of misgovernment. That individual was Grenville. His passion for taxing America had grown little short of madness; opposition only increased his inveteracy; he quarrelled with every one who would not admit the wisdom of this policy; and he refused to enter into any political alliance

* Walpole's George III., vol. iii. p. 125.

of which this principle was not a cardinal point. If there was no judgment in the system to which he was most unreasonably devoted, there was at least some adhesion to a definite line of action, which makes him appear respectable in comparison with the Ministers, who, while not knowing their own minds, were pandering to their Sovereign's prejudices, and disregarding not only all law but even all decency in the gratification of personal animosities.

At the beginning of the year 1768, there became public a most flagrant act of injustice, which alarmed all the aristocracy, and particularly offended Burke and the Rockingham party. The right of one of their most influential supporters to the possession of what he had long regarded as a portion of his private estate, was struck at, in order to please Sir James Lowther, Lord Bute's son-in-law, and to influence the impending election in the county of Cumberland. The tyrannical maxim that no lapse of time could be pleaded as a bar to a claim of the Crown, was revived against a political opponent of the Ministry; and some even of the Duke of Grafton's firmest adherents stood aghast at such an unwarrantable proceeding as the refusal of the Surveyor of the Treasury to allow the Duke of Portland, when preparing his defence, to inspect the records. Sir George Savile, that most chivalrous of country gentlemen, introduced a Bill to set this old feudal maxim aside; and so powerful were his arguments, and those of Lord John Cavendish and Burke, and so shameful was the wrong which had occasioned the measure, that when the Government moved the previous question on the plea of deferring the settlement of the matter until the new Parliament should assemble, they only carried the mo-

tion in a crowded and excited house by the smallest majority. No record of these important debates has been preserved. But this persistence in excluding the people from the gallery was now being felt throughout the country as an evil. It was seen that those standing orders, which were no longer necessary to protect the House of Commons from the resentment of the Crown, were becoming a mere yoke on the necks of the people.

A close observer might see that things could not long go on as they were. The importance attached to the general election that was now imminent, and the enormous bribery and corruption that astonished greyheaded politicians who remembered the times of Walpole, proved how indispensable had become that popular voice which, though it might be counterfeited, could not be despised. This depravity and venality, this buying and selling of boroughs in open market, the unblushing effrontery of the Mayor and Corporation of Oxford, who offered to return their old Members if they would discharge the debts of the corporation, and who, when committed to Newgate, actually concluded in confinement a bargain with the Duke of Marlborough and the Earl of Abingdon, had, amid all the undeniable evil, a latent good. In the time of the Tudors, a man who paid nine thousand pounds for a borough, or spent seventy thousand pounds on an election for a county, would have been universally considered of unsound mind. But such prices were now paid by worldly men who knew the value of their purchases.

This corruption, too, was not altogether the fault of wealthy noblemen and Indian nabobs. The people were themselves most to blame; they proved themselves un-

worthy of the privileges which they bartered away. The new House of Commons, though perhaps both the most arbitrary and the most servile which had been chosen since the Revolution, was, by the exertions of Burke, destined to be the last that could hide its proceedings from the light of day; and the foul spectre which darkness had engendered, shrank away from that glorious Lucifer, son of the morning, the reporter in the gallery.

Even in this Parliament, curiously enough, a reporter taking notes was also to be present, not in the gallery, but in the body of the House; not retained by any newspaper, but one of the privileged Members. The secrets have been revealed; the darkness has become light; for us the grave has given up its dead. A strange emotion may be experienced in perusing, after the lapse of so many years, and long after the actors in this Parliament have passed away, these memorials of what they said. These Cavendish Reports are one of the saddest of histories. The grinning skeleton of Death, unseen by the loquacious Members, but ever present with us who read their spoken words, stands above the Speaker's chair, and mocks those great politicians who were so eager to circumvent Providence and adore George III. One figure alone seems to defy the uplifted dart, and, though mortal, has still on his countenance a look of immortality.

He was elected a second time for the borough of Wendover. Corruption was not needed there. The friendship of Lord Verney, with this nobleman's attachment to Lord Rockingham, rendered Burke's election a matter of course. Lord Verney, and Edmund's two relatives, Richard and William Burke, continued busily

speculating in Indian Stock. Richard and William appear to have had a run of good fortune, and at this time could command a considerable sum of ready money.

Their assistance was probably of much importance to Burke, who, before the new Parliament met, had become a landed proprietor, and had even taken possession of his territorial acquisition. To use his own expressions, which on this matter are the best, because they are likely to be the most accurate, he had, with all the money he could command of his own, and all he could borrow from his friends, made an effort to strike a root in England.* The aid of the Marquis of Rockingham was, doubtless, the most substantial. By such means, Burke was now at least the nominal owner of about six hundred acres of excellent land. There was some meadow and pasture; there was also an extensive portion for agricultural purposes; but the principal part was covered with fine trees, which delighted both his eyes and his heart to contemplate, in their changing costumes with the varying seasons. The estate was called Gregories. It had formerly belonged to the courtly and accomplished Waller, who died here, and was buried in the church at Beaconsfield. The house of this brilliant wit, but lukewarm politician, was said to be the farm-house, about a hundred yards from Burke's own dwelling. This was really a splendid residence, though he sometimes spoke of it in the language of Horace, as a humble cottage. It was greatly improved by himself, was very pleasantly situated, and with its noble colonnades and graceful porticoes, its statuary, paintings, gardens, conservatory, and pleasure-grounds, all arranged with excellent taste, and carefully kept in order, had a most refined and even clas-

* Letter to Shackleton: 'Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 77.

sical appearance. Situated about one mile from Beaconsfield, and about twenty-four miles from London, it looked like a royal residence on a small scale, and reminded the spectator of Buckingham House, which it much resembled.

Here Burke sat down to realize one of his earliest dreams, and to gratify one of his earliest passions. Here he determined to follow his favourite pursuit, and become a farmer in earnest.* Fortune had, at least, so far been his friend. If all was discordant and irritating at Westminster, there were at least peace and tranquillity at Beaconsfield. If the delusions of Kings and the incapacity of Ministers set laws at nought, encouraged anarchy, tore empires asunder, and deluged the earth with blood, spring still returned in all its beauty, the statesman's foliage became yearly green, and his soil brought forth its produce. If, in London, he had motion after motion rejected, and speech after speech disregarded, he could, in the country at least, soothe his anxious mind by walking through his fields, enjoying the beauties of nature, and contemplating the coming harvest. All was not barren at Gregories. Here, if he sowed, he also reaped. But it was not so at St. Stephen's. There his labours were thankless, and his industry without its reward. At Westminster all was excitement, glare, bustle, and confusion. At Beaconsfield the sun was bright, the sky was serene, the air was fresh, and life was calm. The indefatigable energy, which was denied its proper place in courts and governments, could, at least, speed the plough.

All his domestic happiness, all his private joys, were now centred in this spot. Neither did he keep such grati-

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 77.

fications to himself, nor show himself a niggard in his pure pleasures. A day spent with Burke at Beaconsfield, has been looked back upon, by great authors and busy men of the world, as one of the happiest of their lives. The journey from London, the conversation of Burke himself, the ever graceful, gentle, and retiring lady of the house, the spectacle of human happiness and love which was there seen, had all peculiar charms which, in such a combination, could be met with in no other place. The fevered politician drank of a fountain of which the water was clear and the draught refreshing. He might enjoy the contrast between the finely-toned colours in this unobtrusive picture of the domestic life of a great man, and all the heat, hurry, and melodramatic violence of the great historical panorama of Court, fashion, and Parliament in the London season. On the journey down from town, Burke would stop to feed his horses at Uxbridge, chat with farmers, on the crops, the weather, and the price of corn, and show to his guest the house in which the conferences were held between the Royal and the Parliamentary Commissioners during the civil war. He would dwell on all the topics which such a place suggested, until another object introduced other associations. He would point out the varied loveliness of the landscape about Bulstrode, where Judge Jeffries had resided amid sweet English scenery which might have humanized the most savage nature, and where, by a remarkable change of fortune, Burke's noble friend and political associate, the Duke of Portland, the lineal descendant of King William's devoted servant, now resided, at a short distance from Beaconsfield. The old Church of Beaconsfield itself, with Waller's tomb, erected by his brother, was also a fertile theme for Burke to dis-

course upon; for the poet had been equally eminent in politics and literature, and his character offered many salient points for acute criticism and just delineation.

The host's mind never rested. His tongue was ever ready with learning, illustration, and anecdote; and a guest who could appreciate him, would take no notice of the time as it slipped away in this inexhaustible conversation, during which, every step they took awoke an echo of the past. In all this there was a cordial frankness, an unrestrained gaiety, quite exhilarating to those who were weary of the reserve, affectation, and superficiality of ordinary authors, ministers, and courtiers. Even a pun, when it presented itself—and that was not seldom—was not disdained. History and politics, however, were the predominant topics in Burke's hours of relaxation. Even in his amusements there was something political. One of his chief delights was to drive over to Windsor all foreigners who came to Beaconsfield, and show them the Castle, with its majestic keep, rising on its double row of towers, and appearing to him to overlook, guard, and hold in subjection the wide domain beneath, as the appropriate and symbolical residence of British Sovereigns.* Turning from Beaconsfield to the tumult and faction of the Metropolis, we may experience something of the sensation which Burke himself probably felt on leaving his new home, and returning to the arena of his parliamentary duties, in which there was then so little to please the taste, or recommend itself to the understanding of one who wisely loved freedom and respected law.

On Tuesday, the 10th of May, 1768, the new Parlia-

* Hardy, vol. ii. p. 284. Works and Correspondence, vol. v. p. 238; and vol. i. pp. 77-8.

ment assembled to choose its Speaker, and to establish itself in substantial existence. Wilkes had returned from exile with his outlawry hanging over him; had insultingly asked the pardon of the King in a letter, delivered by a footman at the palace-gates; had pledged himself to appear in court on the first day of the ensuing term; had unsuccessfully contested the City; and had been triumphantly returned for Middlesex. His expulsion from the House of Commons had already been contemplated by George III.* The outlaw had stood up in the King's Bench, and, after bearding the Chief Justice, had prudently surrendered himself, while anarchy pervaded the streets of London. On the day of the meeting of Parliament, a crowd assembled round the prison in the expectation of escorting Wilkes from his place of confinement to the House of Commons. The magistrates had been informed, in a most imprudent letter from Lord Weymouth, the Secretary of State, that a military force would be ready at different points to give the civil power effectual assistance, and they were exhorted not to be reluctant in having recourse to this sad alternative. A disturbance occurred. The Riot Act was hurriedly mumbled over, without the people knowing the meaning of the words, or what was intended. The troops fired; men, women, and children were shot down. The dead body of a young man, who was pursued and massacred by the soldiers in his father's out-house, was borne through the streets, and the sight of the bleeding corpse inflamed the populace to madness. From other causes, the sailors in the merchant vessels, the journeymen hatters of Fleet-street and Cheapside, the watermen on the Thames, the colliers, the tailors, were all striking

* Letter to Lord North.

for an increase of wages, or for a redress of particular grievances, and were in a state little short of rebellion. They all looked to Parliament for redress, and the thoroughfares leading to the House of Commons were blockaded by an enraged and tumultuous people. Under such alarming circumstances, with so many political and social evils demanding immediate attention, and with the dark cloud on the far horizon across the Atlantic every day growing larger, and becoming more charged with explosive material; with riot in the streets and throughout the country from Northumberland to Middlesex, and with corruption, imbecility, and indolence in high places; amid uproar and amid blood, opened the second Parliament of George III.

The disorders were not remedied by the meeting of the estates of the realm. Every day the tumults gathered strength; and the country was in a frightful state. The deliberations of the Commons were frequently interrupted by the mob out of doors. On one occasion, a Member, who had just gone out, rushed back in much alarm, and exclaimed indignantly, "The House is surrounded by tailors!" These poor men, however, as might be expected from their calling, were not very pugnacious. They brought a petition soliciting Parliament to repeal a certain clause in an act of the Legislature, and desired that their wages might be increased sixpence a day; but on being informed that no petition could be received in the manner in which they had brought theirs, they peaceably went away to their mean homes.* The Wedderburnes, the Dysons, and the Rigbys might joke at the gathering of the tailors; but the simple petition, the crowding round the House,

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 19. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

and the quiet dispersing of the meeting, was surely one of the most pathetic spectacles exhibited that afternoon under the azure sky. The other rioters were more formidable adversaries ; but they had neither leaders nor combination. One mob was ready to fight with another. The sailors thrashed the Wilkites, and the colliers attacked the sailors.*

The day after Parliament met, an extraordinary proclamation against rioters was issued by the Government. Lord Barrington, the Secretary at War, also wrote a letter to the soldiers engaged in suppressing the outbreak in St. George's Fields ; and, while the proceedings of the troops were about to undergo the investigation of the civil powers, thanked them in the name of the Sovereign, as though they had gained a victory over a foreign enemy. Such strange, dangerous, and unconstitutional actions, combined with the apathy and indolence of the Ministry as a Ministry, excited alarm and indignation in Burke's mind. His language was unusually animated and vehement during this short session ; but all the industry of the ingenious and eccentric Member who has recorded these debates, has been able only to preserve the most meagre outline of the speeches of that statesman whom posterity is most anxious to hear. This may be easily accounted for. So rapid was his utterance, that no inexperienced reporter could do more than preserve in all its original force and perfection an occasional sentence, a peculiar expression, or a striking simile.

On the address of thanks to the King for the Proclamation, Burke drew a most graphic sketch of the disordered condition of the country, declaring that it

* Walpole's Letters to Sir Horace Mann (concluding series), vol. ii. p. 1.

resulted from the system pursued throughout the reign, of breaking up all political connections, and might yet produce still more fatal consequences ; for that the class between the Sovereign and the multitude was disappearing. Conway thought himself reflected on by Burke's allusion to the dissolution of parties, as indeed he was. The Rockinghams were now so much embittered against him, that they would scarcely exchange a word with him in private society.* Like a weak man smarting under reproof, he tried, in reply to Burke, to defend himself, and poured forth some vague, ambiguous sentences, in which neither himself nor others could find any intelligible meaning. Burke repeated and enforced his observations, which were indeed, as his two great political works on this period prove, his deliberate opinions, deduced from his settled principles. There was only, he said, a narrow isthmus between arbitrary power and anarchy ; and the country could never be well governed until those who were connected by unanimity of sentiment held the reins of power.†

There was, indeed, no government. The great offices of state were nominally filled, and their salaries were of course punctually drawn, but Lord North and the Duke of Grafton would have had some difficulty in explaining what was the policy of their Ministry. That the Secretary of War should venture to make, with all the authority of his situation, so important a motion as that for calling out the militia, without consulting either the Prime Minister or the leader in the House of Commons, seems now incredible. It would have seemed equally incredible to Sir Robert Walpole. Most justly did Burke

* Walpole's Memoirs, vol. iii.

† Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 13-15. Walpole, vol. iii. p. 209.

assert that the cause of such disturbances, and the necessity of such proceedings, demanded the most careful inquiry. He afterwards declared that, by passing such a Bill, it would be declaring to the public and to all foreign nations that the whole civil and military power of Great Britain was insufficient to put down a riot in the streets. On being so pressed, Lord Barrington made the marvellous announcement that the defeat of the Bill would be no triumph over the Ministers, because, forsooth, it was not a ministerial measure. There could be little triumph indeed, retorted Burke, over such weak and broken troops.*

Lord North himself confessed that he did not know whether or not to vote for the Bill which the Secretary at War had introduced, and which peculiarly concerned the administration of domestic affairs. There was undeniable truth in the pointed allusions Burke made on the motion of adjournment some days later, and which are besides applicable to other times than those to which they were particularly directed. Drawing a parallel between the conduct of the sailors and that of the Ministry, he found that in all respects the rioters had the advantage. The sailors held constant meetings: did the Administration? The sailors were united: were the Ministers? The Government had issued a proclamation: so had the sailors. Parliament had voted addresses: so had the sailors. Parliament had thanked one magistrate: the sailors had thanked two. He concluded this last speech of this brief session with a stinging sarcasm, a most appropriate comment on all that had been said and done by the advisers of the Crown. "Some persons," he said, "might piously suppose that the world was

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 22-26.

founded on reason; but those who were admitted into the penetralia of Government, and who could see, because they were nearer, might discover that it was founded on a vacuum.*

Parliament had not sat a fortnight; but both the King and the Ministers were anxious to get rid of the new creation. In the state of the country, it was not considered safe to prorogue the two Houses at once until the winter. They were therefore adjourned by easy stages until the 21st of June, and then finally prorogued. The great constitutional question raised by the Middlesex election had been postponed, although it was one which, had it been right to proceed upon it at all, ought to have been immediately determined. No serious inquiry had been made into the grievances of the multitude. Nothing had been proposed, nothing had been done. The Members left London in the most unsatisfactory, the most alarming condition. Looking at these discontents and riots through the lurid medium which the revolutions in other countries have since supplied, it appears as though nothing but the habitual prudence and self-command of the reflecting portion of the nation, prevented the Ministry and the Sovereign from overthrowing all the established institutions of the land, and burying themselves and their opponents in a common ruin.

In June, the outlawry of Wilkes was reversed by Lord Mansfield, on the ground of a technical error in the process. The demagogue was afterwards sentenced to suffer a fine and imprisonment for the famous No. 45 of the North Briton, and the infamous Essay on Woman. In America, things grew worse and worse. At Boston, insur-

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 30.

rection seemed already to have begun. It stood face to face with authority, and neither side thought of averting the coming conflict. During the autumn, William Burke strongly attacked Lord Hillsborough, in the newspapers, for his incapacity and servility :* but when did a Minister for the Colonies ever foresee the approach of rebellion ? Lord Hillsborough, as the new Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, only resembled many of his predecessors, and many of his successors. Instead of governing colonies, he was jobbing places. Instead of thinking night and day of the troubles in Boston, whence his Majesty's Commissioners were obliged to fly to a castle in the harbour for their personal safety, and the authority of the Government was being openly defied, his greatest anxiety was to gratify St. James's, by placing Lord Bottetourt, a Courtier, in the governorship of Virginia, and to secure by a good pension, and still more extensive promises, the retirement from this sinecure of Sir Jeffrey Amhurst, a veteran soldier.

Sir Jeffrey was however the friend of Chatham. This slight put upon the old General, and indirectly upon himself, caused more indignation in the breast of the illustrious valetudinarian, than had ever been roused by Charles Townshend's plan of American taxation, or any of the Duke of Grafton's scandalous and arbitrary actions. It, and the disfavour into which Lord Shelburne had fallen at Court, produced Chatham's resignation.† He ceased in October even nominally to hold the Privy Seal. Cabinet Councils were summoned on the resignation of the noble invalid who had for nearly two years been a Minister only in name ; but on the

* Walpole's Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 240.

† Chatham's Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 338.

great questions which were to convulse both hemispheres there was very little foresight, earnestness, or deliberation.

Yet there was at least one Member of Parliament who saw, reflected, and felt deeply. Even all the novel attractions of Beaconsfield and Gregories during the parliamentary recess, could not seduce the Member for Wendover into luxurious repose. A deluge of rain this summer passed over England, and Burke's first crop of hay had no more immunity from this visitation than that of other agriculturists. His clover had however been stacked in tolerable condition, and all his farming could not infect him with the bucolic disease of grumbling at the times and the seasons.* His first harvest had also been placed in his barn-yard, and his woods were receiving from the hand of Nature the rich brown tints which are ominous of the falling leaf and of the declining year; but much as he took pleasure in these rural pursuits, he could not altogether contract his mind to his simple occupations.

Corsica had been sold by Genoa to France. A brave people were about to be subdued by force of arms, and our great national rival was intent on establishing herself in this important island of the Mediterranean. The English Ministers remonstrated, but their remonstrances produced no effect. While the negotiations were pending, Lord Mansfield had declared in Paris that England would not go to war for such an object; and the French Ministers could not distrust this eminent authority on the policy of the English Court.† The times required a Minister very different from the sullen and indolent young man

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 162.

† Grafton MS., Lord Rochfort's Letter.

of fashion, who in all difficulties had recourse to his favourite recreation at Newmarket. Choiseul, the enterprising but indiscreet French Minister, was intriguing at Constantinople ; Turkey, under his instigations, would soon be apparently the aggressor in declaring war against Russia ; though it was the Empress Catherine who desired the war, was prepared for the war, and was sure to be the gainer by the war. Over Poland, too, the net was now being completely spread, and as soon as Frederic and Catherine should agree to take each a cord from it into their own hands, and succeed in forcing another into the reluctant fingers of Maria Theresa, the meshes would be tightly drawn together, and a noble nation be helplessly offered up as a holocaust on the altar of their impious ambition. Ignorant, incompetent, indifferent, the Prime Minister at such a moment thought but of driving from office his rival, Lord Shelburne, the only man in the Cabinet acquainted with foreign affairs, and of supplying this ministerial vacancy by Lord Rochford, whose placid mediocrity could under no circumstances awaken jealousy even in the most suspicious of bosomis.*

The Royal speech at the commencement of the session, on Tuesday, November 8th, was one of the most vapid of those singularly vapid compositions with which an English Sovereign is in the habit of inaugurating the parliamentary labours of the year. It meant nothing, and was intended to mean nothing. Referring to the pompous sentences in which his Majesty regretted that other Powers had disturbed the tranquillity of Europe, and declared his resolution of maintaining the honour and dignity of his crown, while every one knew that Corsica had been abandoned to France, Burke said that

* Walpole's Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 249.

this came as near to "your true no-meaning style" as possible; that there were words of course, but they were words which, though they might be heard, could not be understood, and that it was like penning a whisper. He delivered on this night a fine oration, the importance of which was however as little understood at the time as the King's speech could have been. He gave a history of the whole American question, and in energetic language stated what he believed would be the result of the system the Ministry was pursuing. "There is no such thing," he told the House of Commons, "as governing a whole people contrary to their inclinations. They are not votes and resolutions, they are not arms, that govern a people."*

He then diverged to the subject of Corsica. On this question he had years ago, before he had become a Member of Parliament, given an emphatic opinion. In that excellent annual publication, which was at the time his only means of influencing the public mind, he had recorded that the Corsicans still gallantly struggled for their liberties, that they had possessed themselves of a great portion of the island, and that if they were not put down by one of the great Powers, such was their bravery and perseverance, they would probably be successful in acquiring that freedom which every people who knew the value of the acquisition deserved to enjoy.† His parliamentary experience, his official knowledge, his association with high aristocratic politicians, had in no respect deadened his earlier sympathies. For years the Corsicans had contended nobly for that freedom which their base oppressors had now, finding they could not subdue, sold to the French Crown. This was the first of those great public crimes on which the English Go-

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 39.

† Annual Register, 3617.

vernment looked with supineness, and the consequences of which Burke deprecated. Where, he asked, were the memorials which the Ministers had written? Would not the cession of Corsica by the Genoese to a Trans-alpine power, tend to disturb the peace of Italy? Could any one say that this island would not be an advantage to France? Honourable gentlemen should make themselves acquainted with the subject. "Corsica naked, I do not dread; but Corsica a province of France, is terrible to me." And why was it terrible? Because, said the orator, as he continued, it announced to the world that we have given up the principle of watching narrowly every alteration in the affairs of Europe, which had been steadily maintained in the best periods of our history. At the moment of the revival of our Constitution, the principle of superintending the balance of power also revived. It had become part of our national character. This character was of more importance to us than our fleets and armies. It was the duty of the House of Commons to attend to every action of neighbouring states, and in its anxiety to preserve peace and to do justice, to burst into the Cabinets of the hereditary oppressors. Never did the States of Europe require more observation than at that moment. The Government ought to be on the watch by day and night. Every moment the Ministers slept was taken from the service of their country. The family compact was in active operation. The dreadful scorpion was occupying a large space in the political horizon. Monarchs, instead of remaining independent of each other, were become one family, united together in oppression; they were circumscribing the Mediterranean, driving Sardinia into a corner, and menacing the liberties of the world.

Such was the tenour of the profound and powerful speech. It might justly be said by a contemporary writer, who related some of the circumstances attending the debate, that "Burke shone particularly on our inattention to Corsica:" but alas! this short comment follows in the same sentence: "The House seemed to take no interest in that subject."* As Burke's words now reverberate in our ears, so prophetic and so wise they appear, one could imagine almost that they might have awoke the dead. On studying the detached sentences in connection it will be seen that it was not the neglect of Corsica alone that caused Burke's terror, but the system of indifference to all foreign affairs, which the Administration had adopted as a principle, and which afterwards induced the King and Lord North to stand by with folded arms when much more enormous, though hardly baser, iniquities were being perpetrated by combined despotism. Looking to the South he saw foreign armies holding Italy in subjugation, and trampling down under their iron heel all that remained to that beautiful land, of political freedom and national life. Looking to the North he also beheld, with his prescient gaze, the accomplishment of that atrocious deed from which, as he foretold, all Europe for many generations would suffer, and at the memory of which, even at this day, justice and civilization shudder and turn pale.

On the 17th, a motion was made for the production of papers respecting this cession of Corsica. Burke said that the doctrines upon which the Ministers supported their actions were much worse than the actions themselves. Such doctrines were disgraceful to the councils of the country. It had been said that we ought not to become the bullies of Europe; but it was to this bullying, as it had been

* Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. iii. p. 225.

termed, that we owed much of our dignity, and not a little of our success in negotiation. He again appealed to the past. He referred to the spirit in which France had conducted the treaty of Munster, and England had seen, under her protection, Holland rise like an exhalation in the atmosphere of Europe.* He concluded by advising the Ministers to recall the disgraceful proclamation which Lord Bute had formerly issued against the Corsicans, when, unfortunately, was begun the passive and abject system of foreign policy that a Court, hating the very principle of freedom to which it owed its existence, had adopted.†

But in truth, the House of Commons had then as little sympathy with political liberty as the King. Every day it seemed that the representatives of the people grew more oblivious of their origin ; and, instead of being a check on the executive Government, were prepared to be a mere machine in the hands of the Ministry for taxing and putting down the multitude. When Charles I. had come down to the House with his guards, and in person attempted to seize the five obnoxious Members, the cry of “Privilege!” had been sounded in the monarch’s ears. The cry of “Privilege!” was now as loudly raised by the Commons, not against the Sovereign, but against the people. Times and circumstances had changed. The watchword of freedom had become the apology of oppression ; and the symbol of liberty the badge of servitude. The tyranny of an arbitrary King had ceased ; the tyranny of an arbitrary House of Commons had begun. At Westminster, there were magistrates sitting on the bench who had encouraged riots, and there were Members of Parliament who were not ashamed to act as agents of police.

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 60. † Walpole’s Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 266.

'The dignity of Parliament was a phrase constantly in the mouths of the majority of the House; and never was there so little dignity in its proceedings.

Colonel George Onslow, a stout little Member, deeply impressed with his personal importance, was one day walking in Bond-street. At the corner he observed a bill-sticker pasting a placard against the wall, and a crowd gathering around and endeavouring to ascertain its purport. It professed to be the real speech of Oliver Cromwell on expelling the Rump, and indeed was a clever, but not altogether unjust, satire on the not less degenerate assembly which was then sitting at St. Stephen's. The fiery little Colonel, who was a nephew of the late Speaker, and one of a family which considered itself to have a vested interest in Parliamentary privileges, pushed the people aside, seized the bill-sticker by the collar, and gave him into custody. The terrified bill-sticker declared that he had received the paper from a milkman, and the poor vendor of milk was also taken up. They were both brought to the bar of the House. The milkman confessed that he had hired the bill-sticker to affix the paper to the wall; the House gravely resolved that this was a breach of privilege; and for this breach of privilege Joseph Thornton, the milkman, was ordered to be committed to Newgate. This according to the opinion of men who called themselves Whigs, on Friday, the 9th of December, 1768, was guarding the privileges of the House of Commons, and maintaining the dignity of Parliament.*

On the next Monday, the defective state of the Middlesex magistracy came under consideration. Hodgson, a Justice of the Peace, who was proved to have excited the

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 101, 102.

coalheavers to riot in February, had not been deprived of his commission, though seven poor ignorant fellows who had borne a part in the disturbances had been hanged. The system by which justice was then administered at Westminster was indeed abominable: broken tradesmen seemed especially qualified for the bench of magistracy, and were chosen for this office after they had been driven from every other employment. Burke strongly urged the House to inquire into this disgraceful business. Riot, said he, had got into the seat of justice; the abomination of desolation had got into the holy place. Modern practice was contrary to the ancient constitution. If they would inquire diligently, they would not need a military power to recommend them to the affections of the people, nor would they have reason to dread the mere mention of the name of Cromwell.*

But the ministerial idea of justice was not more exalted than that of the Middlesex magistrates, whose conduct Burke so strongly reprehended. Wilkes had obtained a copy of the letter which Lord Weymouth had written in April to the magistrates at Lambeth, and this letter he now published, with a strong comment, in the St. James's Chronicle, accusing the Ministry of having designedly planned the collision in St. George's Fields, which was attended with such fatal consequences. The Duke of Grafton, as Prime Minister, warmly took up the cause of himself and his colleagues, and in a passion complained of this publication in the House of Lords. Here was another question of privilege. The printers were seized. One of them confessed that he had received the paper from Wilkes. The Lords voted the introduction to the letter to be an infamous, an insolent, and a se-

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 104.

ditious libel; and, communicating in a conference their decision to the Commons, requested them to agree in the same resolution. Lord North immediately brought forward the motion, which, if carried, directed as it was against a Member of the House, must, according to the doctrines then prevalent, of course be followed by a vote for his expulsion. Such a question, therefore, condemning an absent Member of Parliament, and stimulating the already excited passions of the people, peculiarly demanded the gravest and the most temperate treatment on the part of the leading Minister in the Commons. But, instead of speaking with calmness and propriety, Lord North, in a matter which especially belonged to the House in its purely judicial capacity, only thought of emulating the violence of his noble colleague, made a speech of equal heat and intemperance, and asked his audience to make neither inquiry nor delay, but to join with the Peers in their inconsiderate anger and vehement reprobation. "Let us," said the Minister in conclusion, "at such a paper being laid on our table, be fired with indignation!"*

As soon as Lord North had sat down, Burke rose. A breach was about to be made in the constitution, and the Member for Wendover was the first man in Parliament to sound that loud alarm in which all England would soon participate. With the noble imagery in which he habitually invested the expression of his thoughts and feelings when most excited, he declared himself terrified, though not blasted, by the thunder of the noble Lord, who hurled his bolts about like the Thunderer of famous memory. But judges ought not to be arrayed in thunder. The still silence of the Al-

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 109.

mighty ought to go before the thunder of the House. This was not a question of grammar. Before declaring that such and such words were libellous, ought there not to be careful examination and deliberate inquiry? Or had the House of Commons become a Court of Star-Chamber? All strictures on public men in high situations had ever been called libels. By such proceedings as the Government recommended, not a shadow of liberty would remain to the press; and a Member of Parliament would be in a worse condition than any other subject.*

This speech, if it did not teach the majority of the Members to be just, at least made them pause in their contemplated injustice. To vote, without calling evidence, or the form of deliberation, a set of words to be a shameful libel, and to condemn unheard, and without a trial, one of their own Members who could not be present; and all this without notice or delay, at the mere command of a Minister; were actions too openly flagrant even for that servile Senate to commit. Conway, Dowdeswell, and at last Grenville, followed Burke, insisting that time should be given for the evidence to be produced, and for the accused Member to appear. Lord North was, though with much reluctance, compelled to give way. On the 19th of December the printers were examined at the bar of the House, and this serious affair was then postponed until after the Christmas holidays, when Wilkes was himself to have the opportunity of making his defence. Burke took no part in the examination of the printers. Intent on the general principle, he cared little for the petty matters of detail amid which the Court and the Ministry hoped to conceal their utter

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 109.

disregard of the liberties of the people in the prosecution of a paltry revenge.

He had also other occupations. He was busy writing his first great political work, which he wished to have ready for publication, with as little delay as possible, after the Christmas holidays.

Until this last debate on Lord North's motion against Wilkes, there had scarcely been any important matter on which Grenville had earnestly united with the Rockingham party. The Marquis and Burke had firmly resolved that the American people should be governed, not on any abstract principle, nor on the dogma of any politician, but according to their circumstances and their feelings. Grenville, in season and out of season, would still expatiate on his favourite theme, the insubordination of the colonists, and the necessity of taxing them for imperial purposes. On this question neither party would listen to any compromise; and, exposed as they were to so many temptations from the temper of the Court and the majority in both Houses of Parliament, it is much to the honour both of Lord Rockingham and Burke, that on so important a question of high policy, they never would hear of any compromise. Though Grenville could not number more than ten adherents in the House of Commons, he also aspired to the Treasury. Lord Rockingham, as the leader of a party, composed not only of individuals of the highest rank, but also of the highest character, and as a statesman, determined to maintain, beyond every other consideration, the same principles in office which he had professed in Opposition,* would not, of course, cede this

* They who would think meanly of Lord Rockingham, should study his private letters before despising his character. What other states-

indispensable point for carrying his policy into effect, or permit himself to be made the blind instrument of Grenville's ambition. The manner in which this statesman had formerly used his power, justified every patriotic politician in refusing to give up the country again to such rash and violent manipulation. But he, of course, could not appreciate these motives of a rival leader; for Grenville ever thought himself and his political conduct perfection. The two parties in opposition stood more opposed to each other than to the Government; and what the Grenvilles wanted in numbers and in wisdom, they made up in strong assertion and vehement pertinacity.

Though Grenville was so little of a popular politician, he and his friends were far from disdaining to use the press for their own purposes. Scarcely a month ever elapsed without a pamphlet appearing in which the Stamp Act was extolled to the skies, and the Rockingham party reviled as a set of ignorant, incapable, and factious barbarians, who would not allow the glory of having successfully taxed America to remain with Grenville, and therefore, out of malice and envy, destroyed his masterpiece of statesmanship. Newspaper articles, anonymous letters, and flying sheets, were not thought weighty enough to represent Grenville as the best of Ministers, and Lord Rockingham as the meanest of place-

man of his day ever addressed to his followers such words as these? "I think," writes Lord Rockingham to Dowdeswell, "that, as a general rule, we should constantly look back to what our conduct has been, and adhere to the same line in future. I think we, and we only, of all the parties now in opposition, are so on system and principles; that we ought to avail ourselves of other parties, now in opposition, to effectuate good purposes, and that we should be cautious not even to throw the appearance of leading into hands whose principles we have no reason to think similar to our own, and whose honour we have no reason to confide in."—Memoir of Dowdeswell, in Cavendish, vol. i. p. 585.

seekers. Octavos, and even quartos, came forth on the same inspiring subject. The Rockinghams submitted in silence to this constant infliction, despising their calumniators, and trusting confidently to their character.* They also hoped that necessity and experience might teach Grenville and his few idolaters the prudence of combined action against their common enemy, then daily threatening to make a still further inroad upon the constitution.

All this moderation was in vain. Grenville and his scanty though loquacious band ascribed to timidity and imbecility that reserve which was in truth the offspring of generous disdain and moral dignity. Just before Parliament met, a work came forth from the same manufactory, still more inveterate in its animosity, and still more audacious in its statements, than any of the former publications from these industrious artificers. It was called *The Present State of the Nation*. Quoting extensively from Parliamentary documents, indulging largely in statistics, possessing a certain air of political authority, and appealing to official information, it attracted considerable attention, was the subject of much conversation in the lobbies of the House of Commons, and soon reached a third edition. The conduct of Lord Rockingham while in office, and all the history of the early years of George III.'s reign, were elaborately misrepresented; and a most frightful picture was drawn of the condition of England. To correspond with its conclusions, the tone of the whole work was most lugubrious. The nation with a declining commerce and a decreasing revenue, with corruption in the higher orders and turbulence in the lower ranks of society, was ad-

* Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 8.

vancing to its dissolution. One single ray of comfort there was in this Cimmerian darkness. It was clearly implied, though not openly expressed, that one man, and one man alone, could save the country from total ruin ; and this inestimable individual was of course, Mr. George Grenville. It concluded with a prayer for virtuous and able Ministers to be called into the service of the State ; and Grenville's speech on the first day of the session concluded with a similar orison expressed in almost the same language. " May the Almighty," said Grenville, in his paraphrase of the last page of this work, " who, in so many instances, has mercifully interposed to preserve these kingdoms from destruction, put it into the heart of our gracious King to choose able and virtuous ministers ! "*

Many other sentences of that speech are curiously coincident in expression with other passages in *The State of the Nation*. Grenville evidently had not only had them printed in the book, but could not resist the double gratification of author and orator by also speaking them in the House of Commons. *The State of the Nation*, must then be regarded as Grenville's own composition. It cannot however be indicated as an excellent specimen either of logic or eloquence. Accustomed to the routine of office, where so much that is supposed to be done by the Minister is really the work of a clerk, statesmen sometimes imagine, when they enter the republic of letters, that the business of the writer may with equal credit be done by deputy. It is a great mistake ; and hence some excellent Ministers have had their names associated with some very indifferent publications.

Grenville's deputy in the field of literature was Mr.

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 42.

William Knox. He was a man after his master's own heart. This gentleman's passion for taxing his fellow-subjects on the other side of the Atlantic was as pruulent as that of Grenville himself; and similar sentiments had bound them together in a most cordial union. After Grenville's retirement from office in 1765, his ardent admirer had acknowledged to him in confidence the authorship of a pamphlet which he had written about the Stamp Act, and asked him if he thought a second edition of it would do him any service. Mr. William Knox assured his great prototype that he had sent nearly all the first impression of this treatise to those colonies in which he had correspondents, and that, as they had not since been turbulent, the healing virtue of his little composition had probably been efficacious.* This amusing letter, in which Mr. Knox congratulates himself on the soothing effects of his literary talents, was actually written in the November of 1765, when every ship from America was bringing tidings of the furious excitement into which this same Stamp Act had thrown the Colonies. As the delusion of the author, however, coincided with the delusion of the statesman, and as Mr. Knox assured Grenville that, whatever he might give him, he would not hesitate to risk in his cause, the pair had worked on together.

The one supplied the materials which the other put into shape. Scarcely listened to in the House of Commons, Grenville hoped to find a fitting audience among the people, whom he and his plodding secretary were determined to alarm by their dreadful pictures of the calamities into which the country had fallen, and the more terrible evils which would yet happen, unless the

* *Grenville Papers*, vol. iii. p. 109.

great advocate of the Stamp Act were soon again at the head of the Administration. One pamphlet rapidly succeeded another. The Regulations of the Colonies followed Mr. Knox's account of the Stamp Act, the Consideration on the Trade and Finances of the Kingdom followed the Regulations of the Colonies, and the State of the Nation followed the Considerations. One book referred to its predecessor as an unquestionable authority. The two workmen rested not from their labour. Foundation was laid upon foundation, and superstructure built upon superstructure, until there stood before the literary and political world, a magnificent erection in commemoration of Grenville's wonderful abilities as a statesman, and his innumerable virtues as a human being. Not satisfied however with perpetuating Grenville's glory, there stood Mr. Knox's pretentious edifice, throwing the Rockingham party into the shade, and remaining a monument to their disgrace.

This nuisance became at last intolerable. Collecting his energies, Burke struck some powerful blows, and the whole fabric fell at once to the ground, like a castle of cards, covering with ridicule the two associates, whose perverse industry had been so long employed in rearing so enormous and so flimsy a structure. On the ground which it had occupied arose a mighty trophy to commemorate the wisdom and foresight of their enemies; and this noble memorial, towering into the skies, attracting the eyes of the world, and resting on the solid foundation of truth, it was far beyond the power of Mr. George Grenville, or Mr. William Knox, to destroy. They were dragged ignominiously behind the chariot of their conqueror. Their State of the Nation is now only remembered by the Observations which it called forth.

The first of Burke's great political pamphlets on the affairs of his time, the Observations on the Present State of the Nation, differs materially from any of his subsequent publications. The first portion of it is essentially a treatise on political economy ; the economy of war, and the economy of peace. Great truths, which might be amplified into chapters, fall in sentence after sentence from his pen. No such work had ever before issued from the press, or been attempted by a practical politician. Had Burke not written this book, so averse some of the subjects would seem to the general habits of his mind, that people might have doubted the extent and originality of his ideas on economical science. Adam Smith's great work was not published until seven years after the Observations, which unquestionably suggested many passages in that noble production, and fully confirms the alleged statement of its author, that Burke was the only man who had worked out the same problems independently of him, and, without any previous communication, had adopted the same principles. As published by a leading Member of Parliament early in 1769, it marks a new era in questions of statistics and trade. The mighty comprehension which Burke displays of the whole subject is really wonderful. It shows how much truth there was in the assertion he made in answer to his miserable calumniators in his old-age, that he had in the first year of his public life analyzed the whole financial and commercial interests of the empire, and earned his pension when they were in their infancy. Nothing comes before him without being elucidated. On all subjects he appears to know everything. From the contingent expenses of a Foundling Hospital to the then unrecognized and abstract doctrines of political economy,

and to the highest considerations of imperial policy, he passes as a matter of course; and in showing such information and intelligence leaves the reader interested, instructed, astonished, and delighted. This it was to be statesman such as the world had never before seen, and such as a thousand years may pass away before it will again behold. Nothing is too vast or too minute for the grasp of this man's mind. The proboscis of the elephant, now hurling up a gigantic oak by the roots, and now picking up a pin, is the only illustration which can justly represent the strength and subtlety of that intellect which, as displayed in these Observations on the Present State of the Nation, alternately grapples with the noblest principles of political philosophy, and the most intricate of financial estimates, and not more triumphantly overthrows Grenville on the high ground of statesmanship and empire, than among the petty details of the Navy Board, of which, as having been treasurer, and afterwards First Lord of the Admiralty, Grenville might be supposed completely master. To his official knowledge this pedant of form and routine confidently trusted, and never imagined that his pre-eminent authority in his narrow sphere could be disputed, much less demolished; yet, in his official stronghold, Burke joins issue with him, and flings him horrified and helpless into the dust.

An analysis of the Observations on the State of the Nation would show that it comprehends almost every political subject which then engaged attention. After characterizing the book that had provoked the controversy, and exposing its design, Burke proposes to examine the assertions of its author, not for the sake of the particular measures in discussion, but for the sake of the

principles on which they were based. A long extract is given from this State of the Nation, about the delusion, as it was supposed, of the late war; and the question is asked, could we have had, could we ever expect to have, a more successful war than that which Lord Bute hastily concluded? *The exports and imports of the Colonies are compared, and with much originality and acuteness it is indicated that the imports and not the exports of the West Indian Islands were the proper measure of their value to England as a commercial nation. The treaty of Paris is examined by the three tests of a good peace,—stability, indemnification, and alliance. The author himself hinted that it was not likely to endure; after a war of such cost, and after such an uninterrupted series of successes, our acquisitions did not defray their expenses, and not a shilling had been obtained towards the reduction of the debt; and, by the manner in which the peace had been brought about, we had lost our old friends, we had gained no new ones, and we were now without an ally in Europe. With irresistible force of argument it is proved that our trade had not declined; and, in the full career of triumphant refutation, Burke pauses to make that happy comparison of Grenville to the raven, whose croak was always dolorous; and to the malevolent being of Ovid, who, overlooking all the prosperity, richness, and happiness of Athens, could scarcely refrain from weeping, because there was nothing to weep about.*

The author of The State of the Nation is then found to be as ignorant and absurd in his remarks on other countries as on his own. So far from the condition of France being better than that of England, it was infinitely worse.

* Works and Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 40.

Her finances were so disordered, her expenses had so far outrun her supplies, that in France some extraordinary convulsion, the effect of which on all Europe it would be difficult to conjecture, must inevitably occur.* This is a memorable prophecy. There is another not less memorable opinion. Alluding to the national debt, and the author's terrors on that subject, every one knows, says Burke—though most certainly every one did not know—that the principle of the debt is but a name, that the interest is the only thing which can distress a nation.† Even political philosophers were not prepared to acquiesce in this conclusion. Hume would have read it with a self-complacent smile; the author of Junius, who was just writing his first letters under this celebrated signature, would have treated it with derision.

Burke then examines the author's remedies for what he considered to be such dreadful disorders. Some reductions in the Navy Estimates, some retrenchment in the American Extraordinaries, one hundred thousand a year to be added to the revenue from Ireland, two hundred thousand a year from the Colonies, and some paltry savings in other branches of expenditure, are all the ways and means proposed by this undertaker, at once so desponding and so sanguine, to raise England from the depths of bankruptcy and ruin to the heights of prosperity and greatness. Could anything show more clearly that the man who brought forward such frivolous proposals to cure such organic maladies was not frightened even with his own horrible picture of ruin and desperation, and that it was the mere effect of disappointed ambition? The sun, which gilds all nature, does not shine

* Works and Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 45.

† *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 44.

on the politician out of place. In such circumstances, it was the nature of some men to throw out project after project, and to propose reform after reform, with no intention of carrying them into effect.

This author had made two principal proposals. The one was to increase the number of voters in England ; the other, to allow America to send Members to Parliament. Looking at the corruption and profligacy which prevailed at elections, Burke thinks that it would be more in the spirit of the constitution to lessen the numbers and increase the independence of constituents, than to augment the evils which all deplored, by adding to the lower classes of electors. The plan for America to elect Members to the Legislature in England was analogous to the same author's schemes for revenue : facts and circumstances were disregarded ; the reader had to make something of such visions if he could. Nature set herself in opposition to this particular plan. This author was ever on velvet ; he never thought of difficulties either in politics or in finance : America was and ever would be without positive representation in the House of Commons.

The justice of the constant censures on the Rockingham Administration comes at last to be considered. There is a masterly historical sketch of the condition of England when Lord Rockingham accepted office, the disorders in the Colonies, the discontents at home, and the circumstances attending the repeal of the Stamp Act. The prudence of taxing America is episodically examined ; the commercial regulations and foreign policy of the Rockingham Cabinet are compared with those of Grenville ; and the concluding prayer in *The State of the Nation*, for virtuous and able Ministers, is cleverly ridiculed. Grenville is told, that what the country re-

quires, is not merely good and able men, but good and able men united in policy and acting on definite principles.

Over so wide a field, indeed, does this political tract extend, and so resplendent is the manner in which the different questions are passed in review, that every page will repay the closest and most deliberate examination. The ingenious by-play also pleasantly relieves the formality of the general discussion. Grenville, sometimes as the author himself, and sometimes as a different individual, to whom his advocate is referred as an undeniable authority against some of the statements in *The State of the Nation*, is most unmercifully quizzed. He is depicted as the Malvolio of politicians, at once solemn and absurd, rebuking the irregularities of others, and the dupe of his own vain delusions. Under all the restraints of a political controversialist, the earnest spirit of Burke is yet manifested. Nothing can be more statesmanlike or profound, especially when the time in which the book was written is considered, than his fine reasoning on the national progress, and his implicit confidence in the innate vigour and future resources of what he calls this great misrepresented country.

The success of the work was undenialble. It effectually exposed all the calumnious mis-statements which had so long been repeated, and had gathered strength by repetition, against the Rockingham party. It silenced, it even cowed Grenville. One of the last of the joint labours of this statesman and Mr. Knox, was a reply to the Farmer's Letters on the disputes between England and her colonies, which were so extensively read, and were even admired by Burke, when they were collected and published by Franklin in England. By

the Courtiers these letters were at first supposed to have been written by Franklin himself, though they were, in truth, from the pen of John Dickinson, an enthusiastic agriculturist of Pennsylvania, whose writings breathed a more moderate spirit than those of other American patriots, and had consequently more of Burke's approbation.* They were however regarded by Lord Hillsborough as treasonable;† and Mr. William Knox, for the share he took in writing this reply, met with his reward. Of all the men in the British dominions, he was perhaps the least fitted at that time to have any concern in American affairs; he was therefore, by this Administration that invariably acted in the manner directly opposite to that which a wise Government would have done, actually made Under-Secretary of State in the Colonial Department. Grenville and his political accomplice parted as political friends in this world generally do: the one went into the tomb, the other into office. Their works followed them. They had done a greater service than they would have wished acknowledged. They had provoked an enemy to write a book, which turned out to be the greatest political pamphlet that had ever yet been published. Halifax, Swift, Addison, and Bolingbroke, had all written political tracts, which may still be admired for their style, though many readers will dissent from their reasoning and their conclusions. This work of Burke was of a higher order, and as yet had no equal. Political economy and political philosophy, such as no lapse of years nor alteration of circumstances could overthrow, were now for the first time enlisted

* He called Dickinson "The candid man of America." Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 104.

† Franklin's Works, vol. vii. p. 391.

into the service of an aristocratic connection: eternal truth was introduced to dignify the temporary purpose of the eloquent partisan; and the present and the future were linked together in a matchless and immortal union.

CHAPTER XIV

1791.

STRUGGLING FOR THE BILL OF RIGHTS

NOTWITHSTANDING all Burke's efforts, the *Observations* could not be published and in the hands of Members of Parliament until late in February. Meanwhile, one of the most memorable sessions in English history was rapidly progressing. The preparation of this book was but the employment of a leisure hour; the author was as busy and more actively engaged in another field, and in even more arduous labours, which might have wearied out the energy of any human being. He was, night after night, in the House of Commons, until the candles had burnt down to their sockets, contending, with undaunted energy, for the most valuable rights which the English Constitution had settled on the people, but which this House of Commons, without scruple, trampled down. In the whole of Burke's political life, there was no session of Parliament in which he took an abler or more glorious part than in that of 1769, though hitherto no narrative has been given of his noble struggle. We have seen him as the solitary sentinel who, before the Christmas recess, first sounded the alarm; and we shall behold him in the hottest place of the battle, resisting the repeated attacks which more than

justified all his anxious foresight, and called for all his indomitable zeal.

On the 23rd of January there was a prelude which represented in miniature all the violence and injustice which followed in the great drama. A motion was made by a sensible and moderate member, to extend the privilege of Parliament to seditious libels. This reversal of a former resolution of the House would have calmed the public mind, perhaps averted the conflict between power and popularity, and probably secured to the Ministers an honourable retreat. It was therefore the course which the Government could not think of taking. Lord North proposed to add certain words to the proposed resolution, which entirely nullified any good effect it might have produced, and they were in themselves neither legal nor grammatical. Plain fact and sound reason had no influence over the majority of this House of Commons. The Minister displayed the grossest ignorance, and his supporters the grossest intolerance which had perhaps ever been exhibited in Parliament.

When Burke rose to speak, he was received with loud outcries from the Ministerial benches. He was interrupted in the middle of his first sentence; but he still bore up against the disgraceful tumult. On such a question, he said, the House ought to hear groaning age and stammering infancy. He declared that nothing could be more dangerous than for the House of Commons to justify violence by introducing into its votes the prejudices against any personal character. When unscrupulous Ministers wished to overturn the Constitution, they had ever begun with some individual out of public favour. Epsom and Dudley, for instance, were punished contrary to law; and the young King was then taught

a lesson to which the horror of five-and-thirty years of tyranny succeeded. Lord Holt would tell them what a libel was; it was not for the Commons alone to make the law. "I highly respect," said Burke, "the principles of the Whigs, and I highly respect the principles of the Tories; because I respect men who have any principles at all." But, he demanded, what had the doctrine of libels to do with the principles of any political party? Such a doctrine was contrary to the manners of a free people, and the existence of a free country. Privileges of the House of Commons were only a matter of convenience for the public good; and a good Member of Parliament who did his duty, deserved the honour of it, and required a safeguard.*

The men whom Burke addressed, despised argument, and his words were without avail. He had attained so high a parliamentary position, and so much was his character rising, day by day, in the House, that no effort was omitted that could disconcert him, or render him powerless. There was no chance of overcoming him with his own weapons. In wit, fancy, reason, eloquence, or knowledge, the Government had no debater who could encounter the Member for Wendover. It was thought, however, that if he could not be kept down by fair means, he might by foul; and he became the standing mark for all the scurrility on the ministerial side of the House. He was to be crushed. The means were formidable. An individual was found thoroughly qualified, as was thought, for the office; for he was one who, in the evil arts of politicians, had long been versed, who was troubled with neither remorse nor fear, who, in the corruption and wickedness of his time, stood forth pre-

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 119, 120.

eminent, and whose name has passed into a proverb of political infamy.

This man was Richard Rigby. He had for some months been Paymaster of the Forces, and finding this situation exactly to his taste, had for the future but one object, and that was to remain in it as long as he could. He had plenty of money, and little to do ; all the emoluments of a great office, and very few ministerial responsibilities. He affected a kind of independent position, assumed a patronizing air towards the Cabinet, but was always at hand in an emergency, with his ready tongue and unabashed forehead, to render his friends effectual assistance. Wishing to be thought a manly, jovial fellow, he overdid his part : what he thought frankness, was, in truth, insolence ; and what he considered a mere disdain of hypocrisy, was really shameless vice. He generally came down to the House in full dress, and the purple colour of his coat corresponded with that of his face, which, by his habitual indulgence in Burgundy, had acquired a complexion that, in any other man, might have been mistaken for a constant blush, and was about the only indication of modesty that his features ever gave. The most unpopular and the most unjustifiable of measures were sure to be those which he would most earnestly support. His speeches were never studied. He uttered the coarsest sentiments in the plainest words. He became by this means the terror of gentle and sensitive natures, whose feelings he outraged, and whose resentment he defied. It was his habit never to attribute a good motive for any action, or to give any one credit for patriotism or disinterestedness. He laughed scornfully at all professions of public spirit, and all aspirations for the good of mankind. He despised the people, he

despised everybody, while there was, in fact, no human being so despicable as himself. The Pay Office was now the rallying-point of what had lately been the Bedford connection ; and after the House had broken up, and after Burke had retired, worried and anxious, to his quiet home, all who loved good viands and good wine in the higher ministerial circle, would assemble, and pour out midnight libations to the jolly god, who was the only deity Rigby and his companions ever worshiped. What though the country, by the maladministration of these men, was on the brink of ruin ? What though civil war was impending, and the empire on the point of dismemberment ? They thought little of the responsibilities of government, and cared nothing about the future, while the champagne corks were popping, and the stream of claret and Burgundy appeared perpetual.*

Rigby's former patron, the Duke of Bedford, though suffering from age, blindness, and sorrow, and indeed politically extinct, had been so ill-advised as to permit himself to be put forward as the mover of an address to the Throne, and of the most stringent resolutions that had ever yet been proposed on the American troubles. The last public act of this lineal representative of the house of Russell was to request the Crown to revive and interpret an obsolete statute of Henry VIII., by which the American patriots were to be brought to England for trial, and virtually deprived of all the benefit of a jury of their countrymen. A more injudicious measure, or one in all respects more reprehensible, could not be imagined. The address was however agreed to in the House of Lords ; and it was in the discussions which arose on this and on other American questions in the House of Commons,

* Wraxall's Historical Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 219.

immediately after Christmas, that Rigby made his first rough onslaughts on Burke. They were diligently repeated throughout the whole Session.

If ever the wisdom of one man could have been an effective antidote to the folly of many, it might have been on the 26th of January, 1769, when Burke spoke against the proposed address. "You are firing," said he, "a cannon against your enemy, which will react upon yourselves. Why are you seeking now to revive this statute of Henry VIII.? Because you cannot trust an American jury. Sir, that word must convey horror to every feeling mind. If you have not a party among two millions of people, you must either change your plan of government or renounce your colonies for ever. If you break through established rules, you unhinge human society. When the people of the Netherlands addressed the Duke of Alva against a ruinous tax he was about to impose upon them, he exclaimed, 'Let me have the heads of the principal traitors!' But these heads, Sir, were hydra's heads. What you are doing may irritate, it will not quiet the colonists. Every injustice that you commit in America must react upon yourselves." Rigby and his friends tried to discompose the orator by their noise, but he was too earnest and excited to care for their clamour. "Sir," said he, rebuking them indignantly, "I am pleading the cause of our ancient constitution, of our charters, of everything that is dear to us." Ministers were reverting to examples of which even barbarity and despotism would be ashamed. Carried away by his feelings, Burke here shouted, "Stand up, somebody, and speak to these things!" He concluded in the most earnest and impassioned language, by entreating the House not to sanction the resolutions and the address, that abolished those laws to protect the subject

from charges of treason, which to establish it had cost our ancestors many a weary day, and many a well-fought field. His last words were : "The folly of Administration is tending, step by step, to lead America into confusion. A wise man may fall into error, but want of wisdom in a Ministry is sure to ruin a State."*

All was to no purpose. The resolutions and address were voted, and from this moment the colonists saw it was vain to expect justice or consideration from the House of Commons. The petition of Boston was of no effect ; her complaints were not listened to ; her obnoxious governor was rewarded. Disappointed in obtaining relief from Parliament, the Bostonians became more firmly united among themselves, and Virginia came to the assistance of Massachusetts in what was the common cause of the British provinces. But the House of Commons knew as little the consequences of its acts on the minds of the Americans as when it passed the Stamp Act ; nor in this grave discussion on reviving and extending a tyrannical law to colonies for which it was never intended, and which were indeed not in existence at the time of its enactment, was the attendance of Members more numerous than when Grenville carried his project of taxation into effect, and Burke sat in the gallery, listening to the languid debate.

Honourable Members reserved all their senatorial ardour for the case of Wilkes. Members expressed themselves struck by the contrast which was presented in the state of the House† on the 26th of January, when the American question was under consideration, and that on the next day, when Wilkes's complaint against Lord

* Cavendish, pp. 198-200.

† Speech of Colonel Barré.—Cavendish, vol. i. p. 126.

Mansfield was discussed. Lord North moved that the counsel of Wilkes should only be heard on the alleged grievance of the records having been materially altered, and on a charge against the Treasury of subornation and bribery. The debate on this motion occupied many hours. When the Minister spoke of the indulgence with which Wilkes had been treated, all his gravity could not prevent a smile from rising to the lips of his hearers. The whole conduct of the Government had indeed only been consistent in displaying a personal hatred of the man whom the Ministers had made important only by their reckless persecution.

This Burke knew well. He attacked Lord North and his colleagues with the keenest strokes of raillery and satire ; and though he had no hope of defeating them by a majority, he had at least the consolation of making them unspeakably ridiculous. But there was also most serious advice mingled with his pleasantry. The orators on the ministerial side had complained that juries had given vindictive damages ; and he told them to take care that they did not themselves give vindictive damages in the House of Commons. They were not to set themselves directly against the multitude out-of-doors, or purposely to inflame their passions. Why was an absent Member of the House only selected for punishment as a libeller, while every day the Revolution of 1688 was represented as the cause of all our misfortunes, in such publications as the Daily Gazetteer, without their authors being molested ? This was not punishing a public crime, it was but executing vengeance against one devoted man.*

Rigby spoke in reply to Burke. He expressed him-

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 125-126.

self in his usual bold, defiant, arrogant tone, disdaining all polish, rhetoric or eloquence. This was a rough and ready style of speaking, which, when set off with Rigby's happy audacity of manner, had admirers who refused to listen to the arguments of a great political philosopher, and the most eloquent of statesmen. It was characteristic, too, of the man, that though a place-man, he invariably sat and spoke on the Opposition side of the House ; and that therefore while defending Ministers, whose cause was his own, he appeared unconnected with them, and stood forth at once as a patron and a volunteer. All these peculiarities are of some importance, in explaining, what might otherwise seem unaccountable, how Rigby ever acquired the ear of the House at all. He made his way by pushing himself forward, and thrusting other people back. At the levee he would rush before noblemen of the highest rank, and, full of his personal importance, make his approach without hesitation into the presence of his Sovereign. The same manner which secured him precedence at St. James's, did him similar service at St. Stephen's. What was at first thought downright impudence, was at last acquiesced in through the force of habit ; and men patiently endured from Rigby what they would not have borne from an individual with more ability and less pretension.

It was the fate however of Rigby on this night to be answered by an opponent whose speeches were almost as destitute of artificial graces as his own, whose voice was as loud, whose enunciation was as deliberate, and whose manner was as dictatorial. Colonel Barré had followed Lord Shelburne out of office, and had now become one of the most vehement opponents of the Government, and the most successful of Rigby's adver-

saries. Energetic and resolute, the Colonel's assaults on his political enemies were generally effective, though he wielded not a rapier, but a sledge-hammer. A sledge-hammer however might knock down a Rigby, while a rapier could never have given him a mortal wound. This exploit the gallant Colonel achieved. Rigby had treated with scorn Burke's accusation that the Ministers, while persecuting a libeller of Lord Weymouth with the most vindictive animosity, allowed libels on the Revolution, some of which he pulled from his pocket, to go unpunished. Barré repeated Burke's arguments, and asked, had it come to this, that a Minister of the House of Hanover now openly showed his contempt for the Revolution from which the Dynasty inherited the throne? At the word, Minister, Rigby sprang up, and though he was Paymaster of the Forces, appeared to disclaim being one of the Government. "I have not done with it yet," roared out Barré. "Such language in a Minister is a greater libel, and more deserving of prosecution, than any other whatever. Is he not a Minister? He has a bed all to himself, and in which he can turn very comfortably. He is a jolly, eating, drinking, useful Member of the Administration, and makes his friends welcome. I would not however have his principles, to lie in his bed."* As these words were pronounced, it is actually recorded that Rigby coloured.† But that he ever blushed from a sense of shame, seems such a monstrous supposition, that notwithstanding the fact has been positively stated, this solitary blush of Rigby cannot but be regarded as somewhat problematical. If we are to accept it as credible, all men must allow

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 126.

† Walpole's George III., vol. iii. p. 316.

that he could not have been exactly himself that evening ; that probably from having indulged in greater excesses than ordinary, over-night, in celebrating the triumph of the Bedfords over the American people, the Bacchanalian floridity of his face was more than usually heightened, and his nerves a little shaken.

There were many other occasions on which the same order in debate was preserved. Rigby would reply to Burke, and Barré would answer Rigby. It was resolved that Wilkes's complaint against the Chief Justice was a groundless aspersion, and that his accusation against an agent of the Treasury had not been made good. When this matter was dismissed, it was however only to give room for other materials of discord, and occasions for injustice. The resolutions of the Lords, condemning the preface of Lord Weymouth's letter, were to be determined, and the pretence was to be found for expelling Wilkes from the House. The criminal was as eager to receive punishment as his judges were to pronounce his condemnation ; for he knew that persecution had made him popular, and that persecution only could keep him popular. On February the 2nd, he proudly acknowledged, at the bar, his having transmitted the Minister's letter to the printers, gloried in the turgid preface, and declared himself ready to repeat the same offence whenever a Secretary of State should again write so bloody a scroll. This was all that was wanted. As soon as he withdrew, the Attorney-General, on the part of the Government, proposed, almost in the same words as the other House, that the Introduction, which Wilkes had just confessed to be his, was an insolent, scandalous, and seditious libel.

It was late in the debate when Burke spoke. His
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habit indeed was generally to speak at an advanced hour of the evening, and this may account for the marks of impatience with which on rising he was sometimes received.* He addressed himself to the constitutional question which had sprung up between the Lords and Commons. Answering the arguments of the Ministers, he said, that to maintain privilege to be reciprocal, and that because the House of Commons was an inquest to accuse the Peers, they in their turn might be an inquest to accuse the Commons, would be just the same as to argue that because the House of Commons had the power of granting money, such also was the privilege of the House of Lords, and that because the Lords had a judicature, the Commons had the same office. The Peers represented themselves, the Commons represented the people. The letter of the Secretary of State was of such a nature that the Ministers durst not trust it to the due course of law. It was not true, as Lord Weymouth had written to the magistrates, that it was their duty to apply immediately for troops whenever the civil power was trifled with and insulted. Nor was it necessary, as gentlemen had argued, to connect the military power with the constitution. The law never meant that arms should be blended with the constitution. The army existed for the purpose of defending the kingdom against foreign enemies; and it was never intended that gentlemen of the military profession should be the ordinary executors of justice.†

These ideas Burke shortly afterwards developed more elaborately. Lord Weymouth's letter was indeed in many respects so objectionable, that even the Government officials, who defended it, regretted some of the

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 289. † Cavendish, vol. i. p. 149.

expressions. One Member alone boldly indorsed it as a whole. Rigby again replied to Burke, and stood forth, as usual, sublimely audacious. "I am the hardy man," said he, "to defend that letter!" "Yes!" fulminated Barré, "I believe the honourable gentleman. It reads like a letter penned by an adjutant-general, or a general officer; it gives one a perfect idea of military execution; and for this mode of carrying justice into effect, the honourable gentleman appears to have an official preference. He is Paymaster of the Forces, and has an orderly-sergeant at his door."* But neither Burke's constitutional teaching, nor Barré's stern reprehension, had any effect. The strong current of the ministerial majority swept all arguments and all justice before its headlong violence. The vote of censure, as proposed by the Attorney-General, was carried with an overwhelming force of numbers; and nothing remained but to combine in one resolution all Wilkes's long catalogue of demerits and sufferings, and propose a strong accumulative motion for expulsion.

This was done on the very next day. The miserable rancour of the Court was to know neither rest nor pause; no obstacle was to be permitted to intervene between the opportunity and the revenge. Lord Barrington, one of the most inveterate of that band of servile and sordid placemen who arrogated to themselves the title of King's friends, to the exclusion of the wisest and most illustrious of His Majesty's subjects, brought forward the vote of expulsion, and announced, by his undertaking the office, the predominating influence which had been at work throughout the whole course of this wretched persecution. Rigby, too, was as significantly

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 149.

the seconder of the proposition. The Court had shown a very just appreciation of his abilities. He was the very man to give life and spirit to a confederacy that made the friendship of the King a pretence for their hostility to the best interests of the nation, and whose motive for cohesion was not loyalty, but lucre. He had been bought with the Pay Office; and he was worth his price. He represented more openly than any other individual the principle which had called this corps of political Janissaries into existence. They therefore began to rally round him as their chosen leader, and felt that under his flag they would conquer.

All who wished to acquire an interest at Court, and all who had to retain an influence in that terrestrial elysium, were earnest in voting for what the Sovereign had, not unequivocally, stated to be necessary for his personal honour. A speech against Wilkes and Middlesex was a kind of grace before meat; and the repast would certainly follow. Dr. William Blackstone, sinking the constitutional lawyer in the character of the diligent courtier, proclaimed that it behoved him to vindicate his God and his King.* The piety of the lawyers was indeed one of the most edifying features in the debate. Serjeant Nares, following in the same key as his learned brother, avowed that he would rather be the idolater of a Minister than a ridiculer of his Maker. An excellent sentiment surely; and equally adapted for success in this world and in the next. The devout Serjeant concluded his homily by declaiming against atheism, and declaring that he and every other man was bound to defend the Christian religion because it was part of the law of the land.† As the lawyers argued this question

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 153.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 156.

like eccentric divines, so the Ministers argued it as intemperate moralists. It was from the Opposition that every argument came which would now be called statesmanlike.

Two speeches against the expulsion were models of very different kinds, but both highly admirable, powerful, and conclusive. Embracing every argument, they remained unanswered, and were indeed unanswerable. Grenville delivered what was generally admitted to be the ablest oration he had ever spoken.* Learned, laborious, carefully argumentative, as full of detail as it was clear in exposition, this speech still remains to us as a perfect specimen of Grenville's oratorical style, and in all respects bears out the acute criticism of his character which Burke afterwards made. It is the speech of a man who, in Clarendon's language, had been nurtured in Parliaments, whose life had been spent in Parliaments, and to whom the precedents and customs of Parliaments were all the law and the prophets. He examines point after point with the utmost patience; and on point after point his analysis is completely victorious. The glance he casts on every object within his range of vision is keen and searching; but then this range is limited; the walls of the House of Commons comprehend the whole horizon. The other speech, which was delivered from the same side of the House at a later hour in the evening, to the same purport, might, as a psychological study, be compared with that of Grenville. His production indeed appears to us under some adventitious advantages; for it was revised and printed by himself, and is preserved in all its natural life and beauty. The rival address exists in the fragmentary

* Letter of Lord Temple.

rudeness of Cavendish's notes ; and there are therefore but the fossil remains from which the comparative anatomist can conjecture what were once the proportions and strength of the living being. Yet even through this imperfect conductive medium, the electric spark of real genius and true philosophy still strikes, with galvanic energy, the student of a past century, and leaves him lost in admiration.

“ Those who were lawyers at the beginning of the week,” said Burke, commencing by replying to the Attorney-General, “ have now become men of wit. They are doing very bad actions in a good-humoured manner. But, Sir, men with good-humoured faces have signed papers that have made nations tremble.” With much humour he then went on to describe the whimsical way in which the different supporters of the vote of expulsion had each selected their particular dish from the comprehensive ministerial bill of fare of Wilkes's enormities. He alluded to the statement of Serjeant Nares, that he could not bear to see Christianity abused because it was a part of the English Common Law. “ This,” said Burke, “ is solid, substantial, roast beef reasoning.” Many gentlemen, heterogeneous in their composition, had each chosen what suited them in their several capacities ; and thus it was hoped that, on the principle of discord, unanimity would be produced. The late hour of the night, as indicated by the waning candles, reminded him that this was the last act in the representation of the tragi-comedy performed by his Majesty's servants for the benefit of Mr. Wilkes, and at the expense of the constitution. “ Do not tell me,” said the orator, turning round to Rigby, who was never tired of contemptuously calling him a mere declaimer ; “ do not tell me

that this is declamation. It is sound argument. You are not referring this matter to any known law, and therefore cannot be sitting on a judicial inquiry." Neither, argued he, according to the practice of their ancestors, nor according to any rule in the practice of the constitution, was a libel a crime which prevented a Member from sitting in Parliament. He instanced Prynne sitting in the House without his ears. At this allusion a loud laugh was raised by the majority, who seemed to forget all that had formerly constituted the glory of the House of Commons in the great struggle against Charles I. "Gentlemen opposite may think this a laughing matter," rejoined Burke, "but they may make similar victims in their time. Prynne without his ears was not suffering the punishment of crimes; he was bearing on his person the marks of lawless power." After mentioning other individuals who had been unjustly treated by the House for libels or similar pretences, he then boldly pushed the argument home, and all who were not dead to shame must have winced at this direct appeal. "Does the House believe that John Wilkes, Esq., as he is named in that paper, is a sufferer for his crimes, and not a victim of party? Has not the cause of God and religion, to cover abominations, been introduced into an assembly where it is necessary almost to apologize for being a Christian? Is every Member in the House so pure in heart, so guarded in conversation, that he can never utter one word which a treacherous friend may steal from him, or misrepresent to his ruin? May not the case of Wilkes today, be that of the Minister himself tomorrow? A majority was but a fair flower; in the morning it flourished, in the evening it was cut down like grass, and cast into the

minority ; growing up in these gardens, it was blasted before the night." He then urged with renewed force his arguments for the liberty of the press, and advised the Government to allow Wilkes to sink into his natural obscurity. Before he sat down, he appeared to anticipate that the Paymaster would reply to him ; for he again repudiated the charge of declamation.*

Lord North however undertook Rigby's office. His speech was, in fact, what Burke's was not, mere declamation. Flippant, angry, passionate, it was in all respects unworthy a leader of the House of Commons on so serious an occasion. Utterly unable to meet the arguments of Grenville and Burke, his only resource was the habitual one of all the supporters of the vote of expulsion, who thought that railing at Wilkes's obscenity and impiety, and reprobating with equal violence the violence of his supporters, was enough to justify the most unconstitutional deeds that a House of Commons ever perpetrated. He thought it a direct answer to Burke's splendid constitutional and philosophical harangue to say, that the honourable gentleman was always terrifying himself with imaginary dangers. He reminded him of the shepherd's boy, who was always crying out that the wolf was coming.†

The wolf however did come. Wilkes was of course expelled ; but he was again elected ; and one injustice, as Burke had said, by direct inevitable necessity produced another. The Ministers had grossly violated the Constitution, by expelling a Member for an alleged libel. They had now to maintain the still more unconstitutional principle, that the fact of expulsion alone constituted an incapacity, and totally invalidated the return of the same

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 182.

† *Ibid.*

individual. There was no hesitation ; there was no consideration. On the 16th of February Wilkes was re-elected ; and on the 17th his incapacity was affirmed by the House of Commons, and the election declared void.

The Rockingham party, with Burke at their head, again stood in the breach of the Constitution. They again found all their efforts unavailing. Walpole had been expelled ; and after being again elected, had been again expelled. But his crimes had been carefully stated in the resolutions which deprived him a second time of his seat, and the wording of the motion showed clearly that, though expulsion was the consequence, it was not considered the cause of his incapacity. Dowdeswell moved that Wilkes's offences should also be specified in the resolution which declared his incapacity ; but the Government, even when the same object might have been attained by a less objectionable course of proceeding, as a matter of choice determined to take the high-road of arbitrary power, and would not agree to the amendment. When an accumulation of offences, as in the motion of Lord Barrington, was unjustifiable, the Minister adopted this method in their resolution ; but when, as in the succeeding expulsion, a recapitulation of Wilkes's crimes as the grounds for the former vote, was desirable, they refused to consent to such a verbal amendment, which would have given an appearance of conformity with at least a single precedent.

In the discussion Burke wished, as he said, to obtain a little constitutional information. The mover of the resolution had stated that it was in accordance with the law of Parliament. If this was an established law, it ought to be so on the ground which establishes all laws. Where was the Act of Parliament ? Where was the

record? The temper of the times might be alarming; but it was not in the power of one man, if government were wisely and prudently administered, to produce and perpetuate for a length of time such great and such manifold disturbances. The people out-of-doors must take fire, when the House of Commons went one way and public opinion another. If the House and the people did not go together, which must ultimately suffer? Power that was always vigilant might take advantage of popular confusion; but the fury of the multitude was an ungovernable principle, and when the crisis should arrive, no man could say what would be the end.*

Lord North again spoke after Burke, in the same dictatorial tone which he had assumed throughout the session. Whatever praise this Minister may deserve for judgment and temper when he grew more accustomed to the management of the House of Commons, his conduct in this year was by no means becoming his position. In the course of the debate, James Townshend, who had taken a leading part in carrying Wilkes's elections on the hustings at Brentford, said that the freeholders of Middlesex would join in a petition to his Majesty for dissolving the Parliament. Lord North started up and accused the Member of saying the most indecent things imaginable; and asserted that all who should sign such a petition would be guilty of a breach of privilege the most culpable, the most punishable, that the annals of the country could produce. He was called to order, and the Clerk was requested to read the Bill of Rights, in which the right of the subject to petition the King, which the leading Minister of the Crown had just denied, was clearly stated, and all prosecutions in conse-

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 231, 232.

quence of such petitions declared to be illegal.* Here was a man to guide the deliberations of the House, and to originate the measures of the Government on questions of parliamentary privilege and constitutional law ! To him the jealous susceptibility of Burke, and his sound constitutional doctrines, might indeed be unintelligible. While he thought Burke the boy in the fable, calling out “Wolf!” when there was no wolf, the most charitable supposition is that he knew not the consequences of what he was himself doing, and was but a thoughtless Red Ridinghood, who, in obedience to the voice of the disguised beast of prey, was pulling the bobbin that the latch might go up.

The next election for Middlesex was delayed for a short while ; and, during the brief interregnum, other important questions engaged the House of Commons, on which Lord North and Burke differed as decidedly as on those of Wilkes and the constitution. Sir George Savile’s Nullum Tempus Bill, in accordance with the understanding which had been come to on the previous session, was again introduced, and triumphantly carried. The Ministry however did not yield with a good grace. Lord North, Jenkinson, and Dyson attempted to prevent its prospective application ; but the courtiers were defeated. The indignation of the electors of Middlesex might be met with disdain by the aristocracy, of which the House of Commons, as then constituted, was so largely composed ; but an aristocracy whose possessions had in so many instances originated in Royal favour were deeply concerned in extinguishing all dormant claims to their estates. Interested selfishness, which was ready at the command of the Court to pull down the barriers of the constitution,

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 229.

was not prepared to sacrifice on the altar of royalty its own territorial acquisitions ; and this solitary instance of independence, in contrast with its habitual servility, is curiously suggestive of the prevailing spirit in this House of Commons. The landowners would not follow their ordinary guides. They cared neither for the arguments in favour of nor against the bill. They were so eager to divide that they refused to listen either to placemen or to the Opposition. Both Dyson and Burke, on rising, were received with marks of impatience, and they were both compelled to resume their seats without being heard.*

Three days afterwards the temporary agreement, which had in former sessions been settled between the Crown and the East India Company, was, with some alterations, renewed for five years. The debate is chiefly remarkable for the manner in which the Ministers treated such important matters affecting the interests of twenty millions of human beings, and a vast extent of territory, as a mere matter of pecuniary extortion. What the Company could be driven to pay was all that Lord North and the Government thought about the administration of the Indian Empire. Lord Clive made an able statement, and had his advice been taken, many of the calamities which afterwards arose, and which offered so many subjects for Burke's ardent sympathies, might have been prevented. The arrangement was most absurd. Burke condemned it as contrary to every just commercial and political principle ; and, while complimenting Lord Clive, showed that he was not dazzled by the golden dreams that even the speech of the great soldier had too much encouraged. He seemed to anticipate that sudden fall in the value of

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 251.

Indian Stock which shortly afterwards occurred, which involved so many speculators, including probably some of his near friends and relatives, in ruin, and of which he himself, though indirectly, felt the harassing effects. The present bargain, he said, was not an agreement, but a ransom. Without calculating the revenue, without allowing for risk, without inquiring into circumstances, to make a great commercial company pay £400,000 a year to Government was but a robbery.* From this speech of Burke it is evident that, although he had already begun to look at India as a field of curious speculation, he as yet glanced but over the surface of this Eastern world. He had not yet penetrated into those mysterious depths which affrighted his imagination and curdled his blood. The foulest crimes he afterwards denounced had not yet been committed ; the affairs of the Company, to outward appearance, were in a prosperous condition ; in the course of the last year India Stock had highly risen ; and, with the sanguine fever of speculation, wild hopes were being indulged, which were to be most grievously disappointed.

Nothing could equal the summary manner in which honourable Members disposed of half the profits of the East India Company, and carefully guarded their own pecuniary interests. In disposing of the money of their constituents they were however equally expeditious. This was a fast House of Commons. It was exemplifying every portion of the Rake's Progress ; and while disregarding the advice of its best friends, and destroying the constitution, was also as ready to ruin the estate.

Excitement followed excitement, and dissipation dissipation. The day succeeding the debate on India, Lord

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 266.

North communicated a message from the Crown, acquainting the House that the expenses of the Civil List having exceeded the revenue, a debt had been incurred which His Majesty trusted his faithful Commons would enable him to discharge. The Courtiers were of course all duty and affection. The message was to be referred at once to the Committee of Supply, and the ways and means found the very next day, without any examination of accounts, or any explanation from the Ministers. The Administration kept no terms with the people. They refused to adhere to the precedents which had been established on similar occasions ; they refused even to promise that they would endeavour to avoid such encumbrances for the future ; the time when the multitude was violently excited at the violation of their electoral rights, was the moment when the Ministers resolved that the House of Commons should abnegate its most proper and unquestionable functions as the guardians of the public purse, and acquiesce in the courtly proposition that payment should precede account.*

After the message had been read, and referred to the Committee of Supply, Alderman Beckford made some of the common observations against pensioners which are so familiarly in the mouths of civic patriots out of place. He asked for some accounts, which Lord North afterwards vaguely promised should at some time or other be produced. This satisfied the honest Alderman, who replied, that he never knew anything more fair and candid. But was the money, he asked, to be voted before the accounts were laid on the table ? Lord North returned no answer ; and Burke then said that his honourable friend might talk of candour, but, in his opinion, candour

* Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 159.

never appeared to greater advantage than when it was united with policy. This observation called up Rigby, ready as usual to pounce with ferocious avidity upon his prey. "I never expect candour from people in opposition," said the Paymaster with official equanimity. "Candour comes from Ministers. The honourable gentleman may be candid when it comes to his turn, which it never yet has; for, when his friends were in office, he was not trusted." This was being very polite and very candid too, according to the Rigby notions of decorum and the Rigby principles of ethics. "If my friends," answered Burke to his tormentor, "thought most humbly of me, they thought of me as I think myself. If my services were but little rewarded, they were but little meritorious. I envy not the high price the honourable gentleman has put on his own invaluable services. At the time when I sat on the other side of the House, my friends, I suspected, estimated those services at a very moderate rate. As to the thing called candour, I confess I scorn the pretended use of it. The honourable gentleman despises it for one reason; I, for twenty. It is a half-begotten, spurious, pretended virtue, only praised when men would only go halfway in the right. I stand not upon the ground of candour: I stand upon the ground of truth."^{*}

That evening Rigby said nothing more. But after Beckford's motion had been agreed to, another debate ensued on the general question, when Burke made another speech, and encountered another assailant.

One of the greatest proofs that a politician has taken a decided and successful part in controversy, is the fact of his having made many enemies. Burke had now many

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 269.

enemies. The Observations on the Present State of the Nation, then, being read with admiration and immediately recognized as his, was not adapted for diminishing the number of his foes. The splendid sentences in which he described the insane conduct of those who had deserted Lord Rockingham under the temptations of the Court, and by so doing had contradicted every principle of their former lives, and been induced to acquiesce in the persecutions of their former friends, were in particular most galling to Conway, who believed them to be peculiarly directed against himself. His conscience might have told him that they were deserved; but he could not meekly kiss the rod. Burke's scornful repudiation of affected candour was misunderstood by the worthy General, who, as the debate proceeded, sat moodily brooding over his smarting wounds. Lord North moved the previous question to one of Dowdeswell's motions for accounts. Mr. Frederic Montague observed, that the Minister seemed to have given up that candour with which they had set out. This was bringing back the attention of the House to that disposition of mind which Burke had disclaimed. Conway said a few words on the previous question, and then, with a direct personal application to Burke, which every one understood, added, almost choking with his suppressed resentment, "I have not got rid of that candour which I was taught in the nursery. Whenever it departs from the human mind—whenever it departs from the House—truth and honour will follow it!"* This was the gallant warrior's great gun, fired off at point-blank range in the face of the author of the Observations.

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 275.

Burke stood up unharmed and undismayed. Conscious of what had called forth Conway's hostility, he spoke on the desertion of connections in the same strain as in the book. He was all himself; that is, even while heated by this personal altercation, he was still the statesman and the philosopher. "If candour be temporizing," said he, "I here renounce candour for ever. Let every man's character speak for him. Virtues are not to be sacrificed to candour. The maxim of 'Not men, but measures,' is an insignificant maxim. If I see a set of men acting systematically wrong, and consider that their intentions towards the public are evil, in that case I declare that no acts of such men ought to be supported. Low as I am, I do say it is wrong: I do say it is dangerous: I do say it is unparliamentary." He spoke of connections, of his own party, and particularly of his friendship with Lord Rockingham, against which some reflections had been thrown out. "I am connected," he proudly asserted. "I glory in such connection. I ever shall do so. I had the honour to enter into an office which was but the shadow of an employment; for it had not the substance. With regard to Lord Rockingham, I have no attachment to that noble person but because I know his virtues: they will attach to him all men who may ever know him; such attachment must rest upon him at last. Where I find good men I will cling to them, adhere to them, follow them in and out, wash their very feet. With regard to such great men, when they retire behind the lines of their own virtue, unbiassed by any pension, fixed or floating, or by any one circumstance which furnishes out the business of the day, they are followed by the genuine voice, the unsupported testimony, of their country. As

to the gallant General himself, when I acted on the same side with him, I could have washed his feet too : I was as humble to him as to others ; and had he continued in the same principles, I should have been proud to live and die by his side.” He observed, in concluding this most interesting and curious speech in reply to Conway, and which, being unstudied and unexpected, is, as an indication of character, more valuable than the most elaborate and ornate of orations : “ My poor conduct must speak for itself. I pretend to no great virtue. I am no enemy to true candour. I do not pretend to follow principles impracticable, dangerous to the world, and not founded on the nature of things, or in the order of public business.”*

Even the House of Commons that Burke addressed seems to have been affected by his genuine earnestness and natural simplicity. Conway found that he had made a blunder, and was obliged to make a clumsy apology. At all times irresolute in his manner and tortuous in his phrases, these peculiarities were never more remarkable than when, as on this occasion, he had to declare that he still respected the firmness and integrity of Burke, and loved and honoured Lord Rockingham. The wound still rankled in the heart. Even his friend Walpole’s cynicism could not prevent Conway from suspecting that he had been made to act a contemptible part ; but it is the nature of such imbecility to try to conceal from others, as from itself, the consequences of its folly, and the more the bad effects become apparent, to cling with desperate tenacity to evil, and to hate those who would have prevented such errors in their commencement. As a politician, Conway was every way unfortunate. When

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 275-277.

right in theory he was wrong in practice; and when right in practice he was wrong in theory. But he was never more particularly and hopelessly wrong than when, as was now his custom, he thought fit to dispute with Burke on speculative principles and political propriety. An instance of this kind happened in the next debate.

On the 1st of March the House was to go into a Committee of Supply. Dowdeswell moved that the causes of the debt on the Civil List should be considered before the Royal Message. Burke did not intend to speak at all. But the Courtiers on the one side, and the Democrats on the other, maintained doctrines which, by their extravagance, roused his keen displeasure; and whatever may have been his previous resolution, he could not keep silence. Jenkinson argued that, by the law of Parliament whenever a Message was brought down from the King, it was always taken into consideration on the following day. Alderman Beckford and Sir Joseph Mawbey spoke authoritatively of the instructions they had received from their constituents to oppose the payment of the debt; and evidently considered that to obey such instructions was imperative on a Member of Parliament, even though they might be against his own opinion. "I am instructed to say," said Beckford, "that an inquiry into the causes of the debt will be very agreeable to the people." "I have had," said Sir Joseph Mawbey, "the honour to receive this very day a set of instructions from my constituents." "Read! Read!" shouted, derisively, many Members. Sir Joseph gravely dilated on the contents of his paper of instructions, as a barrister might have spoken from a brief. Dyson spoke strongly against the instructions and the meeting in the Guildhall, where these popular mandates for the City

Members had been settled; but he argued even more boldly than Jenkinson, that it was incumbent on Parliament to discuss, without any delay, the King's Message, and discharge his debts.

Burke followed Dyson. Neither a demagogue nor a tool of power, he condemned both extremes, and took that middle course which constitutional equity and sound policy recommended. He held on his own just, resolute, and guarded way, avoiding both the rocks of despotism and the whirlpools of democracy. As to popularity or unpopularity, he declared such considerations, next to the opinion the Administration might form of his conduct, to be the smallest part of his concern. The doctrine of instructions to representatives was unfounded on reason, and if not put down, would put down the constitution. But the Ministers' instructions for going into Committee of Supply without accounts, were fully as unconstitutional as these instructions from the Guildhall, and even less excusable. The opinion of the people out-of-doors, observed Burke, reprehending the Members who had laughed at Beckford and Mawbey, was not, however, to be derided. The friends of Administration, on account of this jubilee of payment, might be in good-humour; but it was the duty of the House to be indulgent to the people out-of-doors, who in weeping were to pay. "Who, Sir, are the representatives of this mob? Let us not forget from what original we spring; let us not hide in scorn the origin of our own wealth and dignity."*

No exception could justly be taken at this speech, on the ground that it was disrespectful to the people, especially by one who usually supported the Court and was

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 285-288.

on this question ready to vote with the Government. But Conway, again misunderstanding Burke, again thought fit to administer to him a grave rebuke. Oscillating like a pendulum between the courtiers and the extreme popular leaders, the General knew not his own mind, nor could he rest for one moment on a fixed principle. He would not enter himself against the scoffers at instructions ; neither was he prepared to obey them. It was not yet determined whether the money should be voted or not, and gentlemen ought to follow their own opinions.* This was the logic of Conway ; his words were only significant of his mental confusion, and his almost infantine helplessness.

The House at last went into the Committee of Supply. Lord North moved the resolution that the arrears of the Civil List should be discharged, and all proceeded smoothly for the Administration. But when the Report was brought up the next day, Dowdeswell proposed that it should be recommitted ; there was another warm and interesting debate, and Burke's enemies vigorously continued their unceasing war. The speeches of this evening may still be read with pleasure and instruction, for they are full of character. Mr. Henry Cavendish, the industrious reporter to whom posterity is under obligations, was, after his fashion, quaint and humorous ; Grenville, solemn and penurious ; Lord North, plausible and deprecatory ; Lord John Cavendish, moderate but resolute ; Sir George Savile, pleasant and refined ; Beckford, pedantic and patriotic ; Rigby, boisterous and audacious ; Burke alone highly eloquent and brilliantly witty.

Lord North made a public confession of faith. The

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 288.

old apophthegm says that the voice of the people is the voice of God ; but this leader of the House of Commons appeared to think it the voice of the Devil ; for he claimed the support of the majority on the single ground of having voted systematically and steadily against every popular measure which had either been proposed or carried in the course of the reign. The conclusion he endeavoured to draw was that he could not be an ambitious man ; because popularity was the road to power, and there was seldom an ambitious man who did not seek to be popular. Never, according to his own account, was there such a disinterested Minister. Office had been forced upon him ; he did not want it ; he wished to be rid of it ; but he felt that to continue in it was a duty. “It is a duty that will be well performed !” muttered Burke from the other side of the House. Lord North heard the sarcastic remark, and addressed the greater portion of his speech to his watchful opponent, whose perception of the ludicrous was being strongly moved by the Minister’s humble declarations. “I shall thank the honourable gentleman,” continued Lord North, “when he takes this duty from my shoulders. I care not to whom it goes.”

Over so broad a circumference had Lord North travelled, and so portentous appeared his ostentatious humility, that Lord John Cavendish in attempting to reply to him became quite bewildered, and broke down in confusion. Rigby, eager to take a foe at a disadvantage, rushed forward like a wild bull, tossing and goring all round with savage impetuosity. But he reserved his loudest roar and his fiercest rush for Burke. He informed the House that he had been reading the two rival States of the Nation, and, although he had not

had time to examine all the statements of the second pamphlet, he infinitely preferred the former, which was of course Grenville's. He supposed that they had both been written by leaders in opposition; and how, said Rigby, can these two gentlemen, one for the Stamp Act, and the other against the Stamp Act, ever act together? He declaimed against those who gave and those who acted on instructions, in his own original style of scurility, which, for its matchless effrontery, was almost wonderful. Where was the Campus Martius of these instructors? Where were those fields? Moorfields were the only proper fields, observed this exemplary Paymaster of the Forces.

Burke made the last speech in the debate. He gave full play to his sarcastic vein, satirizing Lord North's mock humility, and Rigby's consummate assurance. This must have been a splendid speech; but the report is miserably deficient. It would have been as easy to catch the sunbeams, or the hues of the rainbow, as to retain in all its sparkling effervescence the evanescent touches of delicate raillery and playful fancy in which he appears on this occasion to have revelled without restraint.

His next great display was of a very different kind. He appeared for the first time as the proposer of a direct motion for a Committee of Inquiry into the conduct of the magistrates and the Government, with reference to the tumults and massacre in St. George's Fields. Putting a restraint upon himself, his speech was singularly grave and simple throughout, as befitted the occasion, and was free from all coruscations of wit, or rhetorical exaggeration. He stood forth as an accuser; but as an accuser who was only anxious for justice, and

that the blood which cried loudly to heaven should meet with some commiseration even on the earth. One who was seldom inclined to attribute to a political opponent whom he disliked, a good motive, if he could imagine a bad one, has thought that Burke only brought forward this motion to recompense his friends for their defeat in the debates on the Civil List, and to keep alive the popular hatred against the Administration.* But it is far from necessary to make this supposition in order to account for Burke's indignation at the manner in which the Government had acted, in advising the magistrates to use effectually the troops against the people, and in thanking the soldiers on the inglorious occasion, when they had used their arms against the citizens. His sympathies were always intense. He ever shrunk instinctively from blood. It was quite natural that he should think so melancholy an occurrence as the collision in St. George's Fields a proper subject for Parliamentary inquiry, and the letters of the Secretary of State and the Secretary at War just grounds for Parliamentary censure. For taking the course he did, the speech he made on introducing his motion remains on record, and is in itself his complete justification.

The exordium was earnest, temperate, impressive. He disclaimed any desire to interfere with the decision of the judges. Neither did he wish to deprive Government of any authority; nor to introduce any ideas of a lax and faint execution of justice, so as to weaken the springs of the executive power. But he maintained that a design had been formed to incorporate the military power with the civil constitution of the country, and to establish a military police. Using no epithets, guarding against

* Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. iii.

vehemence, nothing could be more powerful and satisfactory than his condemnation of the whole and every part of Lord Weymouth's letter. What words of extensive latitude, Burke said, for a Minister to use, in telling a mean and ignorant man, a trading justice of the peace, that he ought instantly to call in the military, the moment he should imagine that his authority was "insulted or trifled with!" What a strange conclusion it was, for the letter to wind up by asserting that this armed force can never be used for a more constitutional purpose than in supporting such a magistrate, in what he might think necessary for his dignity! "Sir, I consider this position false and dangerous; I deny that the military power can be employed to any constitutional purpose whatsoever."

In support of this distinct and emphatic proposition, he entered into a fine dissertation on the English polity. He maintained that the cardinal point of the constitution was a deeply rooted jealousy of all bodies of men whose interests and feelings were separate and distinct from the interests and feelings of the great body of the people. The exceptional power of the clergy as judges and as legislators had been taken from them, and their privileges had been gradually melted down into the common reservoir of the nation, not because their office was not sacred, but because the existence of a body of men distinguished from the general community, had ever been regarded with the most insuperable jealousy. Our law was not an administration of lawyers: we had but twelve judges; and the popular trial by a jury of twelve men, taken for an especial function from out of the people, and having fulfilled this purpose, sinking back again into the mass of the people, was the essential spirit of the English judicature. From the high sheriff to the

petty constable, all the officers of justice originated from the people, and had the same feelings, the same interests: in both the superior and inferior judicatures the law was executed by the people upon the people. A military force could never, therefore, be a constitutional engine of justice. It had been said that the civil power was weak; but it was only weak because it was not used. "I here," said Burke, concluding the disquisitional part of this great oration, "I here make a stand, that the civil power may not grow obsolete; that it may not grow into disuse in this country."

He then described with much pathos the death of the young man, Allen, and the other lamentable circumstances which attended the employment of the military on the 10th of May. The conduct of Lord Barrington, in writing the letter to the soldiers and thanking them for their services while a coroner's jury was finding some of them guilty of wilful murder, in conniving at an elusion of justice by permitting the wrong man to be tried and the right one to escape, and by recompensing the innocent man for his imprisonment in a manner which could not but be regarded as a direct approbation of his conduct, were, from Burke's premisses, utterly indefensible. The accuser did not refrain from stating, that were his Committee granted, and his facts authenticated, he would not shrink from demanding the verdict of Parliament upon the advisers of the Crown, nor from bringing forward a motion of impeachment.*

The speech occupied two hours. Even the Ministerialists became somewhat ashamed of the actions they were obliged to defend, and the Attorney-General, who first on the side of the Government rose to oppose the

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 307-318.

motion, admitted that there were some expressions in the letter of the Secretary of State which he would wish to have altered before he could give it his entire approbation. This was a damning admission for a Minister to make, and shows how effective had been Burke's constitutional exposition. Dowdeswell's observations on the Attorney-General's verbal exceptions were most just. "Correctness," said this enlightened country gentleman, "was the most necessary of all ingredients in the letter of a Secretary of State; for such letters were warrants, and might produce the most serious consequences." *

But the oppressive tyranny of the Ministerial majority could not be overthrown by appeals to justice and the constitution. Grenville, whose love of arbitrary measures was as intense as his attachment to Parliamentary forms, refused to support this motion of his literary antagonist. Lord Barrington boldly defended both his own letter and that of his colleague, as well as his decided actions in supporting the soldiers against the civil power. All this was natural, and might have been expected. He was but the mouthpiece of the Royal mind, from which, there can be no doubt whatever, the letters and the proceedings of the Secretary at War directly emanated. Lord North, maintaining that by such an inquiry the executive power would be so much injured that it would be of little consequence either who governed or who was governed, was again humble, and again offered Burke his place. Burke said a few words in reply. He praised Lord Barrington for accepting fully the responsibility of his conduct, and for refusing to skulk behind the screen which the Attorney-General had set up. He assured Lord North that he had a great desire to come into

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 307-318.

office, and that, if he were to do so, it would be of great advantage to the public. Members opened their eyes in astonishment at this frank declaration. Burke begged to explain his paradox. The Ministers had no reason for alarm. They felt comforted as he proceeded to tell them that he never could come into office until the system upon which the Government acted was entirely changed, and that of such a change there was little probability. The noble Lord looked up to the north-star of power, the trade-wind of unpopularity, and felt confident that he would weather the storm. "But I solemnly declare," said Burke, "that I think the ground I have laid down today, if I were to go to eternal judgment upon any portion of my political conduct, is that ground upon which I should choose to stand."*

Posterity can have no difficulty in believing that this asseveration was not mere rhetoric, but truth from the heart. Only thirty-nine Members however that evening voted for Burke's motion for inquiry, and against it the Administration had the portentous majority of two hundred and six. At this day no such catastrophe as that in St. George's Fields could occur in the Metropolis without being followed by long and important debates in Parliament, nor without committee after committee being daily engaged for months upstairs in examining witnesses and weighing evidence. No Secretary of State would now dare to write, no Member of Parliament would dare to defend, such a letter as that of Lord Weymouth: no Secretary at War would now dare to set the verdict of a jury at defiance, and outrage the feelings of a whole community. Burke was teaching mercy, forbearance, and caution to Ministers of State

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 326, 327.

and Commanders at the Horse Guards, on whose most trivial word, on whose most momentary decision in times of tumult and confusion, depended the lives of multitudes who, like themselves, were human beings, and whose blood was not less precious. If not in his own day, at least in the next, he was to find attentive hearers, who would have been proud to vote with him on that division when his first great remedial motion was summarily rejected by nearly seven to one.

But had the debates been properly reported, even in his own generation, all the sound portion of the nation must have been Burke's party. He might justly labour to emancipate the press and the nation from these Parliamentary restraints, because no Member ever suffered so much from this exclusion of the people. He was advocating the cause of civilization, of humanity, of the world : it was not among a Venetian oligarchy that he could find a fitting audience : it was his interest that his words should be as widely diffused as the winds of heaven or the rays of the sun. Under this close system the path of the young Member, with the greatest ability, but without rank and wealth, was much more toilsome and painful then than it could be at the present time, when in the contest of genius against power, the cheering sounds of popular applause may ring in the ears of the intellectual champion, and encourage him at every renewed effort.

And though Burke had now been five sessions in Parliament, he was still regarded as a young Member. In one of the many debates on the conduct of the High Sheriff of Cumberland during the last election, an altercation sprang up between Grenville and the Speaker, which was not calculated to exalt the dignity of the

Chair. The Speaker had replied twice to Grenville, when Burke rose to order, and ironically observed that there was a time when a Speaker had said, in answer to a monarch, "My eyes are dim, I have no tongue to speak." But some gentlemen had thought the Chair was now in the debate. They were wrong. If all their senses told them so, they were wrong. Here Burke was himself called to order. Mr. Stanley severely censured him for not showing due respect to the Chair. "I am surprised," said this complacent personage, considering himself a Parliamentary veteran, and Burke a presumptuous youth; "I am surprised that the gentleman should have offered this to the House; for though an able, he is yet a very inexperienced Member. A very little reflection might have taught the gentleman that his interruption was improper. It was unusual, novel, and extraordinary." Burke expressed his infinite gratitude at being brought back into the path of order. If he had chosen to obstruct the Chair, it was from a motive of respect. Did he imagine, did he suspect that the Chair had got into the debate? Did he not put it directly the contrary?*

He could not but feel some little contempt for men who were so ready to attack him for disregarding forms, from the spirit of which they were themselves daily further receding. The events which had occurred during the session, as well as others which had yet to come, abundantly demonstrated that experience in Parliamentary forms did not imply legislative wisdom.

On the 16th of March, Wilkes was for the third time elected Member for Middlesex. No other candidate ventured to present himself on the hustings; the popular

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 343, 344.

favourite was therefore once more elected without opposition. At every election the excitement of the Londoners had grown more violent, and prudent people expected that the Government, after declaring the new election void, would delay issuing another writ until the latest possible moment. In this manner the political seesaw between the majority of the House of Commons and the majority of the electors at Brentford, might, without much further evil to the constitution, have continued until the end of the session, when, from want of fresh stimulants, the inflamed passions of the electors and of the representatives might have quietly cooled down.* The Rockingham party especially advised this course of action ; but the malignant insanity of the Government again set all calculation at defiance, and all policy at naught.

On the next day Rigby, without even condescending to make a speech, or to enter into the form of a debate, moved that the election and return were null and void. In opposing the motion, Burke was as remarkably calm and temperate in manner, as his advice was admirable and judicious. Wilkes might be incapacitated by a resolution of the session, but it would surely be more prudent to defer this motion. The Administration were in the disgraceful situation of neither being able to retreat nor advance with honour ; but where no mode of action could be assumed without bad consequences, it would be right to leave the cure to time, and for the moment to suspend all action. The sharp, corrosive votes of the House of Commons would not eat away the proud-flesh ; medicines, culled from all the simples of every county in England, would not give relief. The

* Annual Register, 1769.

hands of the operator must be stayed, and something left to the vigour of nature. The people who kept Mr. Wilkes in the public eye were his friends, and their country's enemies. Burke concluded by telling the House to take care, whenever the question might come before it, that they should have a true Member, and not a fictitious one, for the County of Middlesex.*

The last sentence showed the apprehension which he now entertained. The reply of Lord North could not diminish his constitutional anxiety. This Minister said that Burke had taken most of his illustrations from the science of medicine; and though it was not he who used the simile of the blister, yet his speech had made him smart. "I have often," said Lord North, "felt him upon my back. I shall deem that man who shall have a majority of legal votes the true Member for the county of Middlesex."†

The election was nullified, and a new writ was immediately ordered. The Government had now obtained a candidate who was prepared to encounter all the indignation of the people, and with military audacity to take his seat as Member for the county in defiance of the great majority of the electors. During the interval between the last debates and votes on the question, the irritation of the Capital, as Burke had prophesied, increased, and the Sovereign was insulted in his palace. A procession of merchants, under the influence of the Court, on their way to St. James's with a loyal address, were stopped by an enraged multitude at Temple Bar, compelled to fly through back streets and bye-lanes, and to appear in a miserable plight in the presence of the

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 348-350.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 351.

King, who had himself, with his Ministers and all the Ambassadors, been besieged on this state occasion for hours without being able to do anything to maintain his dignity or restore order. The Ministers who had been most forward in raising up this storm at Westminster, were most helplessly abject and imbecile when the furious billows surged round St. James's Palace, and covered the King and themselves with disobedient spray. In proportion to the arrogance of their tone in the House of Commons was their incapacity for administrative government shown when London was a prey to the disorders they had themselves foolishly and repeatedly provoked. Their terror at St. James's was to be compensated by their rashness at St. Stephen's.*

On the 13th of April, the fourth election of Wilkes, as Member for Middlesex, took place. He had nearly nine hundred votes over Colonel Luttrell, the young volunteer who had gone on this forlorn hope against the constitution, and whom the Ministry had resolved to place in the House as Member for Middlesex. They were so impatient for their triumph over all law and all reason, that they could not wait until the candidate could have time to petition. George Onslow, the son of the late Speaker, was put forward as the most appropriate performer in this fourth act of this strange drama, which was to establish the principle that the representatives, instead of being chosen by their electors, were themselves to choose Members for their constituents. He moved that the return of the writ should be read. A desultory conversation followed, which scarcely rose to the dignity of a debate. Every one felt it to be what Burke called it, a mere

* Walpole's Letters to Sir Horace Mann, second series, vol. ii. pp. 28, 29.

preliminary discussion. He alluded to Dyson, who was in many respects a small Grenville, and said that if turning the journals up and down like a book of prayers were meritorious, the honourable gentleman had undoubtedly great merit. If men could not, replied Dyson, like the Member opposite, make a figure in other ways, because they had not his abilities, he ought not to blame them for plodding in the service of the House.*

Burke had also an altercation with George Onslow. The county of Surrey, as bordering upon Middlesex, and in close contact with London, was affected more directly than others with the passions of Wilkes's constituents, and was naturally displeased with its Member, even though he did bear the distinguished Parliamentary name of Onslow. In the course of the evening, Mr. George thought proper to talk much about his conscience, the principles he had been taught in childhood, and the envy with which, in his own county, he was regarded. Burke assured him that he was not one of the envious ; he had no views on Surrey ; and he was quite astonished that any one should look upon the Member for that county as an object of envy.†

This was on a Friday night, in the debate, that the poll should be considered the next day. Every one knew that the intention of the Ministers was to elect Luttrell as the sitting Member for Middlesex ; and, as only formal questions were discussed on Saturdays, and as the proposition of the Government would certainly occasion a long debate, the Opposition thought it would only be proper to adjourn until the Monday. Burke and his friends were again overruled. Even the piety of the ministerial lawyers was not proof against the desire of

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 363.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 365.

summarily choosing a Member for the electors of Middlesex, though, as was most probable, that object could not be finally attained until an early hour on the following Sunday morning. This consideration, with those who had so solemnly arraigned the impiety of Wilkes, may indeed possibly have been a recommendation, on the principle that the better the day the better the deed.

At length then this contest between the House of Commons and the Middlesex electors had come to a final issue. On Saturday, the 15th of April, it was to be determined whether the man whom a great majority of the electors had chosen, the man whom the Sheriffs had returned as duly elected, should be the Member for Middlesex, or whether an individual put forward for this ostensible purpose should, in opposition to the suffrages of the great body of the voters, be declared, by a majority of the House of Commons, the sitting Member, the return falsified, and the whole spirit of the English constitution completely reversed. The people thronged the lobby and all the passages to the House of Commons, and they could scarcely, even at that late moment, believe that the Government would carry their threat into execution. But the Ministers had neither doubts nor hesitation; and, looking forward to a certain triumph, they were more than ordinarily defiant and arrogant. George Onslow again came forward as the first character in the conclusion of the dramatic epic which sang or spoke of resolutions and the man. He boldly maintained his motion that Colonel Luttrell should have been returned Knight of the Shire, to be strictly according to the principles of the Revolution, of which, as he said, the chief was to establish the power of the House of Commons. This doctrine, he, with much authoritative assumption, stated

that he had imbibed ever since he knew the meaning of the word, and that in making such a motion he had the conviction of acting as his beloved father would have wished him to do. In all this there was a lurking consciousness of the weakness of the cause : assertions and names were made to stand in the place of facts and arguments. But, not satisfied with speaking himself, Onslow thought himself at liberty to regulate the discussion throughout the evening ; and when Beckford, always honest, if sometimes mistaken, and on this occasion quite right, contended that the doctrines of the Member for Surrey were not founded on the true principles of the Revolution, and that every resolution of the House should be in harmony with the constitution, and with the rights of all the freeholders of the kingdom, this son of the old Speaker rose again, and, with much obvious intemperance, called the Alderman to order. "I call upon the House," said Mr. George, "to suppress that gentleman. If he again attempts to argue against a resolution of the House, I shall move to have his words taken down."

Grenville, with much ardour, interposed. He energetically affirmed, that the man who contended that a resolution of the House of Commons was the law of the land, was an enemy of his country ; and he administered a very well-merited rebuke to Mr. Onslow for his presumptuous officiousness. But Grenville's physical powers were giving way, and the vehemence with which he spoke so much overtasked his weakened frame, that, as he resumed his seat, blood flowed from his lips. The pale shadow of death was on the brow both of the worthy Alderman and of his warm defender. In a few months they would both be unexpectedly summoned

away from the scene in which they were now so busy and so excited, little dreaming of the end that was approaching.

Dyson tried to excuse Onslow, and called up Burke, who had no wish to speak on this point of order, but was reserving himself for the great cause then impending. "The Alderman said nothing more," briefly stated Burke, "than that this House has no power to disqualify Members at its pleasure. I affirm the same thing." *

The check which the courtiers received at the beginning of the debate did not make them humbler. The same repulsive features that all the discussions on the question had shown in the course of the session, were, on this evening, only still more prominently displayed. The Ministerialists thought all discussion unnecessary. In their minds, the conclusion that Colonel Luttrell should be made Member for Middlesex was foregone ; and they could not bear to hear arguments against their manifest predetermination. They scraped their feet, they made noises with their lungs, they imitated the braying of asses, and the inarticulate sounds of other animals ; but their favourite mode of showing contempt for the Opposition, was to gather round the Speaker's chair, and engage him in private conversation, to the great annoyance of the orator who was addressing the House. It was as Burke was speaking that they were most assiduous in trying to prevent all arguments from being heard, or even delivered, against the motion ; for they well knew that it was from his mouth that the most weighty reasons against their cause would come.

With his countenance deeply evincing his impression of the serious nature of the question, and with the con-

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 370.

viction that the people at the doors of the House were in the right, and their representatives, who were carrying matters with such a high hand, quite in the wrong, he presented himself to the turbulent audience as the advocate of an impatient and afflicted people. A loud burst of derisive laughter greeted this statement. His blood was up, and he was not to be disconcerted. "Low as I am," continued he, "and humble as the gentlemen opposite may think me, when I am pleading the cause of the people, I fear the laugh of no man. However they may be misled, they are deeply concerned ; everything valuable to you and to them is involved in the fate of this question. This is a contest between the freeholders of England and the House of Commons." The noise increased. The conversation about the Chair became more contemptuous, and the Speaker had almost turned his back on Burke. This was too much. "I will be heard," exclaimed the orator, in tones of passionate menace ; "I will throw open the doors, and tell the people of England that when a Member is addressing the Chair in their behalf, the attention of the Speaker is engaged!"*

Had a bomb fallen on the floor of the House, it could not apparently have produced greater effect. Silence at once ensued : the orator continued his argument against the motion ; and, though George Onslow was still a little exuberant, throughout the rest of his speech Burke was evidently listened to with general attention. There was at the moment something in his fervid manner at which the tools of power could not but feel awe.

Every sentence in this speech expressed strong reprobation. "You are going," said he, "without petition or

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 378.

complaint, to violate justice. Yourselves the inquisitors, yourselves the judges, you are going to vote, in the face of the poll now upon your table, that a minority of two hundred and ninety-six is the sense of the county of Middlesex." Yet the people who complained of these things were opprobriously called a set of beggarly free-holders. "Sir," said Burke, "if a party distinction is to be raised up between the gentlemen and the people who tonight have been called beggars, woe betide the gentlemen!" He drew a distinction between the King and his Court, professing all respect for the virtues of the Sovereign, but vehemently denouncing the vices of the courtiers, who were more regardless of decency than had ever before been seen, and who made a merit of despising and neglecting the people, whom they contemptuously called a mob, but who were really more virtuous than the commonalty of other nations. These humbler classes called for protection from the great, and never could believe that Henry Lawes Luttrell ought to be returned as Member for Middlesex.*

Lord North, who followed in the debate, delivered a very unsatisfactory speech, and concluded by repelling the imputations which Burke had made upon the profligacy of the Court. "Give me a day," reiterated Burke, "and I will prove my accusation. In the name of the people of England, I accuse the Administration. I will come to persons, and I will come to facts."

This challenge was not accepted. Grenville and Dyson, two excellently matched antagonists, with laborious prolixity, quoted precedents against each other; and at three o'clock on the Sunday morning, it was affirmed, by a pious and orthodox majority of fifty-four,

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 378-382.

that Colonel Luttrell ought to have been returned as Member for Middlesex.

There was still, however, an anti-climax. As there was yet much ministerial business to be transacted, the budget to be brought forward, and the merchants who adhered to the Court to be rewarded by having lottery tickets showered upon them, Parliament could not be immediately adjourned. A fortnight was given for the electors to petition against the decision of the House of Commons, though there was no reason for hoping that the judgment would be annulled. The men who were to hear the appeal, were themselves the offending parties; and in this indeed consisted the whole absurdity of the case. Nevertheless some apparent compliance with form it was necessary to show, while the essential principle of justice was deliberately violated ; and the 8th of May, the last day before the prorogation, was appointed to hear counsel for both the candidate with the majority of the freeholders, and the Member elected by the majority of the House of Commons.

On that day Counsellor Lee, a staunch adherent of Lord Rockingham, and who, though rough in manner even for a lawyer, had a heart as tender as that of a woman, and the mind of a genuine nobleman, pleaded at the bar in support of the petition of the electors. Serjeant Whittaker spoke in defence of Colonel Luttrell. After the counsel had withdrawn, there was another long debate. Blackstone, in contradiction to the first volume of his Commentaries, which had only recently been published, strongly advocated the most extreme power of the House of Commons in deciding on the eligibility of the Member whom a majority of the electors had chosen. Burke's speech was a powerful constitutional

reply to Blackstone's technical quibbles. Alluding to the temptation of our Saviour, by the Devil, on the mountain, he said he would fall down and worship, not a resolution of the House of Commons, according to the bait the Ministers offered, but the law of the land. Passing fully in review the question, as it had gradually arisen throughout the Session, Burke, as the curtain was slowly falling, and hiding the blackened and gaping ruins of the constitution from sight, fearlessly re-opened the whole discussion, and, in defiance of all resolutions and standing orders, powerfully directed his full battery of argument and eloquence against the ministerial position.

As he concluded, a young man, who had not yet attained his majority, stood up, and, without any embarrassing diffidence, thought fit to set his juvenile intemperance against his matured friend's unanswerable wisdom. Dark in features, rather heavy in person, but with an eye full of fire, and a countenance beaming with intelligence, this youth had come into Parliament for Midhurst at the last election; and though he had only taken his seat at the beginning of the present session, had already distinguished himself as one of the most animated, intrepid, and unscrupulous supporters of the Court. On the 15th of April, when it was voted that Colonel Luttrell ought to have been returned, even Rigby himself could not have used more insulting and defiant language, than did this precocious minor, against the freeholders of Middlesex, and the rights of electors. He now spoke again on the same question, in answer to Burke, and was not less audacious than impious in expressing his scorn for the suffrages of the multitude, and for the constitutional cause which Burke had so power-

fully advocated. He declared that he would no more take the will of the people from a few factious demagogues, than he would take the will of God Almighty from a few priests. In stating that such a vote as was then under consideration belonged to the Legislature as a whole, and was not to be decided by the House in a judicial manner, like an ordinary election petition, Burke had begged the question. He had also, his young opponent confidently asserted, no right to say that Colonel Luttrell had been sent to stand for Middlesex by the Treasury; and the ardent youth proclaimed that for this noble action he would adore Colonel Luttrell to the last moment of his life.* Such is the antagonistic position to the popular cause and to Edmund Burke, in which Charles Fox first presents himself on the scene, to the spectator of the last century, and the thoughtful student of human affairs. The young man all confidence, and the great philosopher regarding him with an eye of pity, in an apparently hostile attitude, these two figures, as Colonel Luttrell is declared duly elected, and the session ends, stand in an apparently hostile attitude, facing each other.

Fox visited Burke at Beaconsfield in the course of the summer,† and the political education which had been so long suspended during the time he had spent abroad since he was first introduced to Burke, was gradually resumed, and produced important results. He felt himself irresistibly attracted to the man whose life was so different from his own, and the soundness of whose constitutional doctrines he had presumed to dispute in the House of Commons; and the young man, obeying

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 427.

† Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 91.

the better impulses of his nature, found himself, almost unconsciously, again in the position of a pupil to a master. Burke's commiseration was soon to become active benevolence, and under his teaching Fox was to leave behind, though never to recant, the erroneous opinions of his youth.

CHAPTER XV.

1769-1770.

EXPOUNDING WHIGGISM.

THE recess had come; but without bringing rest either to England or to Burke. The excitement throughout the country, but particularly in the neighbourhood of London, was intense during the summer; and consequences which the courtiers had little foreseen, followed from these Middlesex elections. They had set the example of addressing the Sovereign, and the people made haste to profit by their teaching; but in a spirit quite opposite to what the King and his counsellors had desired. For one address on the side of the Government, there were six in favour of the Opposition; and there was no comparison between the number of signatures to these contradictory assurances of popular sympathy. That machinery of agitation with which we have grown so familiar, was for the first time constructed; and though the rudeness of the original invention may seem despicable to those who are only acquainted with it in its exquisite perfection, yet was its first production a sign of alarming import to those whose imprudent measures, rather than the genius of any enterprising individual, had both rendered it necessary and furnished the design. When the people found that the House of Commons had ceased to sympathize with them, and acted openly in defiance of

their wishes and interests, it was a direct legitimate consequence that they should, by holding public meetings, passing resolutions, voting addresses, and signing petitions, combine against a majority of the representatives who had themselves openly and insolently combined against the people. Hence all the evidence of a want of harmony between the House of Commons and the people to which the present generation has been accustomed, was for the first time witnessed in its bolder features in the summer following the election of Colonel Luttrell.

No Government had ever before successfully encountered such general unpopularity. Though Burke was far from being confident that a desirable result would be brought about, according to all former experience, a change of Ministers was expected. The day after prorogation, a great banquet was given to the Opposition, at the Thatched House Tavern, in St. James's-street. The toasts were highly popular, they were drunk with much cordiality, and all was apparently unanimous. Lord Temple and Grenville, Lord Rockingham and Burke, with nearly seventy other Members, including Hamilton, for the first time dined together; but many shrewd observers confidently predicted that this union was altogether superficial, and that the different parties would never sit down together with the same cordiality in the cabinet. Among the incredulous was that common friend of Burke and Lord Rockingham, the virtuous Lord Charlemont, who tranquilly surveyed the fierce distraction of English society from Dublin, and to whom Burke had written a circumstantial account of the last debate. To this Irish nobleman the projected union appeared so unnatural that he frankly informed Burke

he could never give it his entire approbation, and that he could not have sat down with a good appetite to dine with the hero of the Observations.* There is no doubt that Burke had much the same feeling as his noble correspondent; but at the moment it was not for him to express his misgivings. A distinguished leader of a party is sometimes only more pre-eminently a slave.

He had not yet, as Lord Charlemont hoped, after such a laborious session, altogether exchanged the smoke of London for the pure air of Beaconsfield. There was a fascination in the violent popular ferment which drew a political philosopher to look at the ebullition of passions in which he could not fully share. The 24th of June was a great day in the City. Patriotism was rampant, and would show its strength. Contempt and defiance of the Court and Government were to be manifested by John Sawbridge and James Townshend, Wilkes's leading supporters at Brentford, being chosen Sheriffs, and a petition to the Throne voted for a redress of grievances. Burke squeezed himself with much difficulty into the Guildhall that afternoon, as soon as the doors were opened, and remained, half stifled with heat and pressure, until the two champions of Wilkes were elected, and the petition carried. Some of the thoughts that occupied his mind, as he watched the enthusiastic proceedings of the patriots of the City, they would scarcely have thought complimentary either to themselves or to their cause. While they were shouting, hissing, groaning, and hurrahing, he was indulging himself in curious speculations on the effect of the human voice; and as the thunder of applause shook the Hall on the two patriots being declared duly elected, he found his ideas of this power of making

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 83.

a noise very much enlarged. On the same evening, as he was waiting for his coach to carry him to Barnet, he wrote a hurried letter to Lord Rockingham, and, in describing the scene he had just beheld, did not forget to notice this experimental fact of vocal capability, which shows us, accompanying him amid circumstances so dissimilar, the old investigating spirit of the author of the Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful.*

But other reasons, besides his wish to look upon the popular agitation, may have detained him in town during these hot days of summer. Though, in comparison with his former position, he was to all outward appearance a prosperous gentleman, he was undoubtedly at this time suffering from pecuniary embarrassments. It is easy to guess the nature of these difficulties, which cannot be fully explained. The crash which he thought possible in the affairs of the East India Company had come with tremendous violence ; and, shortly after the recent debate, Indian Stock had fallen sixty per cent.† All the speculators, who had been rioting in imaginary wealth, saw ruin staring them in the face. Hyder Ali, in ravaging the Carnatic, had caused a panic in 'Change Alley ; and the present despair was proportionate to the late presumption. The Directors produced despatch after despatch, and assured the proprietors there was no reason for alarm ; but the epidemic spread fast, and the stock went down. The miserable state of the starving wretches who suffered from Hyder Ali's first descent upon the Carnatic, was in some measure paralleled by the condition of the dealers in Indian Stock, who had been looking forward to boundless

* This letter will be found, without a date, in the Memoirs and Correspondence of Lord Rockingham, vol. ii. p. 96.

† Annual Register, 1769, p. 53.

wealth, and in consequence of the same merciless hostilities, found themselves suddenly on the verge of bankruptcy. In such a storm, the fortunes of Richard and William Burke were doubtless, with those of their associates in the same traffic, tossed helplessly on the waves. Instead of continuing to Edmund the assistance they had before afforded him in making his landed purchase, their necessities probably required from him the immediate return of all they had before advanced. Burke was certainly at this time compelled to borrow more money. A letter dated this month of June, 1769, is extant, in which he asks his old friend Garrick for the loan of a thousand pounds. Whether or not the great actor was able to accommodate his friend does not appear; but their friendship remained as cordial and pleasant as ever. In August, Burke sent Garrick a late turtle, with a complimentary epistle full of delicious flattery, which must have been even more acceptable to his sensitive and vivacious correspondent than the epicurean delicacy.*

But however vexatious may have been the scarcity of money of which Edmund had reason to complain, there was, even in this period of pressure, no diminution in his kindness and generosity to genius and misfortune, which, throughout his life, and in his own narrow circumstances, he believed it a sacred duty to aid.

Barry, the young painter, was at Rome. He was still

* "Dear Garrick,—I send you a Rosa sera, a late turtle—an entertainment at least as good for the palate as the other for the nose. Your true epicureans are of opinion, you know, that it contains in itself all kinds of flesh, fish, and fowl. It is therefore a dish fit for one who can represent all the solidity of flesh, the volatility of fowl, and the oddity of fish. As this entertainment can be found no longer anywhere but at your table, or at those tables to which you give conviviality and cheerfulness, let the type and shadow of the master grace his board."—Garrick Correspondence, pp. 332, 353.

maintained by the Burkes, who corresponded with him, and directed his studies. His progress had not been altogether satisfactory. As he grew older, and his position as an artist was, in his own opinion, more established, his failings in temper and management became painfully obvious. Even in the letters which he sent to his kind friends, his want of tact, his constitutional irritability and his presumptuous pertinacity, were very apparent. He had begun that course of warfare with his associates in art which all his subsequent life displayed. He quarrelled with the eminent virtuosi and picture-dealers at Rome, as he afterwards quarrelled with Sir Joshua Reynolds and other eminent artists in England. The little tricks and disingenuous artifices which have been at all times so generally practised by Italians engaged in the business of *virtù*, roused Barry's spirit. He thought it incumbent upon him to expose their dishonesty, and to set rich travelling Englishmen on their guard against their machinations. He contradicted their opinions on art. He expressed his criticisms with much forwardness in all companies. He thought himself a sufferer in the cause of honesty; and while relating his conflicts to Burke, desired him to keep his letters to himself, as, were they to become known in Italy, the writer might be in danger of assassination. But it was not difficult for Burke to discern that there were serious faults on the part of the young artist, and that the assurance and impracticability he was exhibiting, might be most injurious to his interests. People who had been in Italy did not see Barry's contentions in the same light as he did himself; and he was so sensible of this, that he wrote to his patrons, warning them against being influenced by their reports.

This letter gave Burke an opportunity of speaking plainly. On the 16th of September, disengaging his mind from his own circumstances, he sat down and wrote that noble letter of advice to the young painter which has long been published in Barry's works, and which ought to be learnt by heart by every ambitious youth commencing his career.* Both as a composition, and for the noble and humane sentiments which it contains, it is impossible to speak of this epistle too highly. Every sentence embodies the germs of sound advice and deep reflection : it is not the philosophy of the mere politician, but of the sagacious man of the world, in the best sense of the expression, counselling a younger man. Burke does not attempt to presume on the difference of their positions, or on the many obligations, as weighty as those to a father, under which Barry was placed. The great statesman writes to the young artist, to whom he was affording the means of prosecuting his profession, as a friend to a friend ; and every admonition is couched in the most respectful and the most delicate terms that the English language could afford. There were then many great noblemen who were desirous of being regarded as patrons of art ; there were Ministers of State with extensive galleries of pictures ; there were wealthy merchants willing to spend some portion of the gains they had acquired by trade in encouraging literature and painting ; there were rich nabobs with bags of money in heavy chests ; there were fashionable personages writing books on antiquities, and laboriously collecting curiosities ; but it was only at Beaconsfield, in one who had himself sprung from the people, and who was himself but a little removed from a

* Barry's Life and Works, vol. i. p. 154.

state of dependence, that the obscure young artist could find a counsellor, a protector, and a friend.

An individual, whose temper was quite as unreasonable and as impracticable as that of Barry, though in a different condition of life, was now forming a considerable ingredient in the political speculations in which Burke was indulging, and perplexing his considerations about the future. After two years and a half of seclusion, Chatham had again appeared in public, had paid a visit to St. James's, had driven in a gay and youthful equipage past Burke's door at Beaconsfield, and attended by two coaches, six horses, and twenty servants, had been seen proceeding to visit his brother-in-law, Lord Temple, at Stowe. It was given out that the noble invalid's health was quite restored, that the gout had dispelled the clouds which seemed to have settled thickly down upon his intellect, and that he was resolved to take an active part in the business of the next session. It was even conjectured that he would soon be again called to power, and some sanguine people were already talking of the wonders the revived Lazarus of patriotism would accomplish.

Burke was far from sanguine. He had long since ceased to expect miracles of wisdom and foresight from Chatham. He believed him to be a physician more calculated to inflame than to heal the distempers of the State. With Chatham's restoration to health, Burke's old antipathy immediately revived. It is curious to see the energy of hatred with which he comments to Lord Rockingham on the fact that their late enemy had been at the levee, and had been invited into the King's closet. There was much truth, as well as much force of expression, in the sarcastic description of Chatham's style

of addressing the Sovereign. The Earl's letters show that, in both matter and manner, he was only too frequently at once "significant, pompous, creeping, explanatory, ambiguous."*

But Chatham was at this time unusually humble. He appeared sensible of the grievous error he had committed in driving Lord Rockingham and his friends from office; and was sincerely desirous of uniting with the injured nobleman and his most respectable body of consistent followers, who had steadily opposed every bad measure of the bad men whom, at the cost of the constitution, the unity of the empire, and every principle of good government, Chatham had thoughtlessly allowed to occupy the citadel of power. Such a junction as Chatham now desired, was not however so easy of accomplishment as he supposed. Temple and Grenville, with whom Chatham was allied, were very desirous that Burke should visit them; but he was in no hurry to give, as Lord Rockingham's most intimate friend, this mark of adhesion to the plan of politics which the brothers had formed, nor was he prepared to lend himself or his party to the selfish aggrandisement of the Grenville family. Chatham singly, or Grenville singly, might possibly be manageable; but Chatham's love of dominion, united with Temple's love of mischief, and Grenville's love of arbitrary practices under Republican forms, boded, in Burke's opinion, no good to the principles and the system which the Rockingham party had uniformly maintained.† While carefully watching every step which might bring the Rockinghams nearer to the three brothers, it was still necessary to keep up appear-

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 87.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 90.

ances. This caution did not however accord with Burke's natural temper. Having nothing of the diplomatist in his disposition, he ever liked a firm and decided conduct either in friendship or in hostility.

It was necessary for all who were in opposition to the Court to co-operate in the county of Buckinghamshire. A meeting of freeholders to petition the Throne for redress, was delayed until after the harvest could be gathered. In the interim, Burke was looking anxiously to the North, and advising Lord Rockingham to energetic action. At last Yorkshire gave signs of life, and, much to Burke's satisfaction, the Marquis and his friends had a moderate, but sufficiently firm and constitutional address, triumphantly voted and numerously signed. Buckinghamshire followed, though not without some time-serving on the part of George Grenville. On the day when the petition of his county was carried, Burke attended the meeting at the Town Hall of Aylesbury, and afterwards dined at a market ordinary with a considerable section of the freeholders, under the superintendence of Lord Verney; while Lord Temple, in another house, at the head of the rest of the freeholders, sat down to a similar meal, and drank the same toasts. Temple was eager to make Grenvillism predominate at the meeting; Burke as eager to counteract this tendency; and though plenty of wine was drunk at the expense of the two Peers, the harmony of the parties was but superficial.*

The suspicion with which Burke regarded 'Temple could not be removed. But decency and policy at last obliged him, under the importunity to which he was now exposed, to relax a little from that studiously cold

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 96.

and reserved manner with which he had hitherto received the Peer's overtures. At length, as the autumn advanced, Burke and his cousin William spent a few days at Billesden, the seat of Lord Verney, and took the opportunity of calling one morning on Lord Temple, at Stowe. The tall, gaunt Earl, whose stoop made him appear almost bent double, and whose image is one of the least agreeable which arises from out of the shades of a past century, was on this occasion alone, and Edmund and William spent three hours with him in his magnificent gardens. As Burke was himself fond of horticulture, he found much to interest him in looking at the innumerable flower-beds, statues, fanes, and pavilions; and was better pleased than he expected to be with the grounds, which, having been altered by many different hands, showed evidences of many different tastes. But the conversation soon diverged into politics, and was far from being satisfactory. Burke observed that the paramount evil of the time was the Court scheme of having a dependent Administration, and of making a party for the King in opposition to his Government. Temple replied, that such a plan might not have been so bad, had it not been spoiled by Lord Bute. Burke answered, that in his opinion such a design, without reference to Lord Bute, was mischievous. They both formally repeated their observations, and with much politeness, but with no friendship, took leave of each other.*

A fortnight afterwards they had in London another interview, in which there was more frankness on the side of Temple, but almost as much reserve as ever on the part of Burke. They had separately come to town

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 104.

about the presentation of the Buckinghamshire petition to the King, and the Earl requested the commoner again to call upon him, expressed at their meeting much apparent friendship for him and for his party, and sketched out a plan of politics for the Opposition, coinciding with Lord Rockingham's sentiments. But it was, in truth, impossible for them to agree. Chatham and the Grenvilles, both titled and untitled, were ready enough to enlist themselves in that rank of courtly sycophants and slaves which Burke and Lord Rockingham considered it their first object to destroy. When Temple conversed with Burke on this subject at Stowe, he did not know that the man who stood before him was even then engaged in writing an elaborate work, in which all the discontents of the reign were ascribed to this fundamental error; and that he was embodying his sentiments in a treatise which was henceforth to live for ever as the political creed of the Rockingham Whigs.

Grenville's State of the Nation not only appears to have occasioned the Observations, but also to have first suggested to Burke a work of perhaps still greater importance. As the book which Mr. Knox edited was a digest of the principles of Grenville's political school, Burke, in replying to it, probably caught the idea of stating in a deliberate manner the principles of his own party, and of entering deeply into the causes of the prevailing disorders. Independent of his own great abilities for political disquisition, such a work had many considerable recommendations. As he looked around him, and estimated the different parties, it was not difficult for him to perceive that Lord Rockingham's connection was the only one which still acted on distinct principles and on public grounds, and that the rest were mere confedera-

cies, or followings of individuals for objects purely personal. A statement of the principles on which his friends acted in opposition, and were determined to continue to act, should they ever again attain power, would not only render their conduct more intelligible to the world, but also be a powerful cement in keeping them closely united. Written with the power he could bring to the task, it might indeed be still more potent in its effects. As he regarded the party, not only as a means of carrying sound maxims of government into practice, but also as the repository of those sound doctrines of political morality, and those authentic title-deeds of pure Whiggism, which it was desirable to transmit in traditional purity to other generations; so a book which should contain the tenets of the Rockingham Whigs might by its precepts, as they themselves did by their practice, teach politicians who were to come after them to persevere in the same line of conduct, imbue their minds with the same generous and noble sentiments, and be the justification of Lord Rockingham and his party to all who, in the most distant ages, should take an interest in the political history of their times.

Burke had no sooner settled down at Beaconsfield, in the summer, than he began this great labour. He was to be the great interpreter of Whiggism to his own generation and to others which were to follow. On him had fallen the mantle of Somers, who, like himself, without birth, wealth, or friends, had by force of genius alone, worked himself forward to be the great instructor of a haughty aristocracy. While the kingdom was in a flame, while the rage of petitioning was spreading, while Burke, who had himself a great stake in the general agitation, was sharing in the constitutional ferment of the season,

he was also snatching every quiet hour to examine in the calm spirit of a disinterested inquirer, and to discuss in the comprehensive spirit of the philosopher whose only aim was truth, the violent convulsive disease which was afflicting the nation.

He met with many interruptions. He could scarcely write for two consecutive days at a time. The Yorkshire petition and the Buckinghamshire petition were at the moment quite as necessary for the party as the composition of this great work ; but some progress was gradually made, and in the autumn a considerable portion of it was sent into the North for the inspection of Lord Rockingham. Burke desired the Marquis to ponder on it attentively, to decide whether it should appear at all, to suggest any alterations he might consider necessary, and to communicate it generally to their friends. He wished the sanction of their political allies to be obtained, in order that they might constitute it their manifesto, and with the glory, share with him also some of the obloquy which the publication of such a work, against the most cherished designs and established prejudices of the Court, would necessarily occasion. Burke seemed less pleased with it in general than some of those to whom it was submitted. He had at first thought of writing it in the form of a letter to John White,* the late Member for Redford, who had with some sternness, all the purity of an old republican, whose political conduct throughout his long life had been steady and consistent, and whose character was much respected by all who could appreciate fidelity in party connection and integrity in private life. He was one of the last representatives of the old race of Whigs who had welcomed

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 182.

the accession of the House of Hanover, perilled their lives and fortunes in maintaining the principles of the Revolution, and through all circumstances stood manfully by the Brunswick succession. To such a man the work which endeavoured to recall a wandering and unstable generation into the path their old Whig forefathers had trodden, with so much honour to themselves and so much advantage to their country, might have been most fitly addressed. But Burke found that the plan which he had at first chosen was not adapted to the subject, and it was afterwards abandoned. Another, which he substituted, still failed to give him satisfaction; and it was not until the work was nearly finished that it assumed the form it finally retained.

He was sensible that these many alterations were injurious to the general arrangement. A deficiency of this kind may perhaps still be seen in some parts of the work. His natural manner, which in all his later writings he deliberately followed, was more suited to give effect to the productions of his mind. We may still think that the epistolary style in which he first began to write this pamphlet, and afterwards preserved in the *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, was the best form into which he could throw his powerful thoughts, and at the same time give scope to his eloquent discursiveness. If he was always didactic, it must be confessed that he was always most pleasantly and peculiarly didactic.

The matter of the work, in the course of revision, also underwent some important modifications. As it was originally written, there were some strong sentences on the conduct of Chatham in placing himself at the head of the Courtiers for the purpose of destroying the Rock-

ingham party, and lending himself as the ready instrument of their worst designs. These passages were however omitted, not through any fear of giving offence to the proud Earl, but as an act of policy, lest the world should imagine that Lord Rockingham and his followers wished to quarrel with all mankind. It was fully foreseen that the publication itself could be no favourite with Chatham, who had often spoken with scorn of all connections, and had thought fit to defy the Whig aristocracy in general, and the Rockingham party in particular. Much censure on his recent conduct, though not openly expressed, was very plainly implied. The whole work was indeed an exposure of the mischievous effects of his actions since the year 1765, and an answer to those maxims against factious aristocracies which he had openly propounded. The more his return to political life became certain, the more anxious did Burke and Lord Rockingham grow for the appearance of this work. Chatham might then know what he had to expect. If he thought of uniting with the Rockinghams, he must unite with them on those principles of government which they thought necessary for the nation, and which they would never abandon. If this union grew hopeless, and Chatham acted with the same enmity against their party, and the same tender consideration for the Court which had marked his public conduct before his indisposition, such a book would then remain as the living vindication of the Marquis and his friends in acting steadily on their own line of policy, without regard to the views of the Ministry, or of the three brothers.*

Beginning with some general reflections on the delicacy of all inquiries into the disorders of the time, and

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 203.

the admitted distempers of the period on which he was writing, Burke first, as a point of etiquette, notices the hypothesis of the Government respecting the cause of these admitted evils. He cannot adopt their reasoning, because it resolved itself into this brief and discouraging proposition, that the country had a very good Ministry, but a very bad people. When serious popular discontent prevailed, without thinking that the multitude was always in the right, the natural presumption was in their favour. A quotation is given from Sully's Memoirs, affirming that great revolutions were not the effect of popular caprice; and it is remarked that the observations were applied to the system of favouritism which Henry III. of France adopted, and to the dreadful consequences that it produced. It did not follow that the nation had no grievances, because they were not the same as in the times of the Tudors and the Stuarts. Against the existence of Parliament no designs had been entertained since the Revolution; but it had been found that the forms of a free Government could be compatible with all the objects of tyranny; and without violating any express law, the constitution had been entirely perverted from its principles. The House of Commons had been turned against the nation, whose feelings it ought ever to reflect; and instead of controlling the executive Administration, had become, in the hands of the Ministers, the means of controlling the people. The Crown now acted in an arbitrary manner, with the aid of an instrumental House of Commons. The project had been first entertained in the Court of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and had been first put into practice on the death of George II. A line was to be drawn between the Court and the Ministry; a party was to be

formed expressly against the ostensible Government; in this plan Parliament was to be induced to acquiesce, by being taught a complete indifference to the men in high office, and under the direction of the Court to see the Administration placed in the hands of people who, until their sudden elevation, were without eminence in the nation. The executive power was to be systematically weakened, to strengthen the royal authority; there were to be two parties in every Ministry; and the first Minister was to be artfully thwarted by the dependants of the Court, placed designedly in the lower offices of the Government and the Household.

These formed the King's party, and proudly called themselves the King's friends. A powerful sketch of this base and unscrupulous faction follows; and Burke has preserved them, in all their infamy and servility, for the edification of posterity, like stuffed reptiles in a museum of natural history. We see their poisonous sting on the point of darting forth, but now quite harmless: we wonder at the fascination of the evil eye which is now but glass: through their manifold contortions, now quite motionless, we trace their grovelling propensities; and on gazing attentively at the hideous though lifeless objects before us, we almost fancy that we can hear the malignant hiss, and shudder at the deadly rattle.

He then traces the effects of the system which these men supported. He shows how pernicious had been its operation on the minds of the people, whose affections it had alienated from their Sovereign, and on the whole foreign, colonial, and domestic administration of the empire, which was in the greatest distraction. Neither had it secured the objects it professed to seek. It had

not maintained the King's dignity ; it had not prevented him from taking into his service people who were known to be personally disagreeable to him ; it had not given him accumulated treasures ; it had not even preserved to him the peaceful enjoyment of his private hours. What had been its effects on Parliament ? It had made the name of the House of Commons, once so dear, hateful to the people, and degraded a national council into a mere appendage of the Court. Burke then comments, with irresistible logic and energy of diction, on the conduct of the Ministry during the late session, in the business of the Middlesex elections, and the discharge of the debt of the Civil List, as part of the deliberate scheme to pervert the forms of Parliament from their constitutional ends, and to make, for arbitrary purposes, the popular branch of the Legislature odious to the nation. His own resistance to these measures of the Government, as it has just been detailed, affords the best illustration of his splendid reasoning in the book : it will be found to throw an additional interest on his powerful writing on the same themes, and indeed on every page of this unrivalled commentary on the history of these years, about which so much has been said, so little understood, and no judgment likely to find general acceptance, yet been fully expressed.

He at length examines the popular remedies for all evil, which the new Society of the Bill of Rights, and the rest of Mr. Wilkes's admirers, were generally adopting. He has no faith in the favourite proposition of a return to triennial Parliaments, and to a disqualification of all who held civil employments.

His own propositions were very simple. But experi-

ence has found them in a great degree serviceable. Light was to be let in through the windows of Parliament, that the people might see what their Representatives were doing, and who were really their friends and their enemies, by correct lists of the voters on every question being published, the actions of every Member carefully scrutinized, political information diffused, and sound opinions formed. How he took the lead in affording the public out-of-doors the means of acquiring knowledge on all Parliamentary proceedings, will soon appear. But this efficient measure none of the blustering patriots of the City, or those who condemned the work for its alleged aristocratic leanings, because it concluded with the most eloquent and luminous defence ever written of political combinations, as indispensable in a Constitutional state, thought of mentioning, or even alluding to, on the hustings at Brentford, or in their meetings at the Guildhall.

As soon as the book appeared, they raised a loud outcry against the author, and the party to which he belonged. They would not be convinced by his arguments; they would not admire his eloquence. The courtiers were not so enraged as the Society of the Bill of Rights, because the author of the *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents* discountenanced triennial Parliaments, spoke doubtfully of the propriety of shutting out officers of the army and navy from the House of Commons, and actually defended the monstrous proposition, that men who had the same opinions on public affairs, should act together in a party, in order more effectually to carry their principles into practice. He was merely the clever agent of an ambitious aristocracy, who endeavoured to turn the grievances of the people to their own advantage. He had no real sympa-

thy with the popular cause. His friends did not desire to see the evils of the time done away with, but only thought of getting into office on the easiest possible terms. These reproaches coincide closely with a similar burst of rage from similar quarters, when, twenty years afterwards, the next great political work came from the same pen. Yet, at that time, some people thought it convenient to forget, or were so ignorant as not to know, that at this period of his public life, as during the French Revolution, the moderation of Burke's sentiments in favour of liberty had been obnoxious to the extreme patrons of popular reforms; and that his first quarrel with the Constitutional Society did not occur in 1790, but was the continuance of a long-standing hostility.

In 1770, as in 1790, he had also his Paine, and one who was perhaps more formidable than the enthusiastic admirer of the French Revolution. This earlier antagonist, who had no diffidence in disputing his principles, was—what was then thought as strange a phenomenon as the great beard of the corpulent but venerable Lady of Brentford whom Falstaff personified, though it is one with which society has since grown perfectly familiar—a literary Republican in petticoats. The sister of Sawbridge, Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, undertook to refute Burke. In a two-shilling pamphlet she shouted, she shrieked, she scolded; and, as was natural, female patriotism, when boldly contending with the greatest of political philosophers, went off in hysterics.

Two great men shared in the republican matron's rage against the author of the *Thoughts*, and gave her their most ardent sympathies. As Burke had anticipated, Chatham disliked the book. The tacit but most intelligible censure which it conveyed of his conduct in form-

ing his Administration with the King's friends, and engaging heartily in their schemes for the destruction of the Whig aristocracy, could not be agreeable to the mind of that arrogant and impracticable statesman, who, though desirous of atoning in some measure for his former conduct, by acting with Lord Rockingham, could not bear to admit his errors; and, perhaps unconsciously, still hated the Marquis and his party for the injuries he had done these scrupulous and honourable politicians. Like Conway, he felt keenly the lash of Burke; and, like Conway, the merited chastisement filled him with resentment against the powerful hand that had inflicted the castigation. It was not a momentary displeasure. Himself the idol of a section of the patriots who composed the Society of the Bill of Rights, and who wished him to patronize their foolish plans of reform, so that the Rockingham party might appear invidiously alone as the opponents of these popular remedies, he could not but join in their anger against the philosophical author who reasoned from firm principles of government, and who was far from regarding the greatest of historical connections as the mere instrument in the personal glorification of any single individual, or as the obedient slave of the frothy effervescence at the Guildhall.

Chatham did not even conceal his vexation. More than six months after the publication of the work, and on a very mournful occasion, he took the opportunity, in answer to a letter of condolence from Lord Rockingham, of giving vent to his mortification against the author by telling his noble rival that the book had done much mischief to the common cause, and evidently attempted to excite in the breast of the Marquis a distrust of the man who had so faithfully stood by his side, and so nobly ex-

pounded the principles of his party. But Chatham little knew how intimate and confidential were the relations between Lord Rockingham and Burke. This nobleman at once placed the letter in the hands of the friend whom it had been intended to damage in his esteem. Burke appreciated Chatham's attention to his work, and understood the motives which had dictated the epistle. Long after the death of both the Peers, Burke, on looking over the papers of his departed leader, happened again to find this letter. He immediately sat down and wrote on a spare leaf of the document a strong comment, in which, by calling it a knavish composition, he showed himself fully conscious that it had really been intended to injure him; and proved, by the vehemence of his language, that no length of time had abated the bitterness with which, both from private and public wrongs, he still regarded Chatham's memory.*

The other eminent individual as much annoyed as Chatham with the *Thoughts*, though he took a more covert way of showing his anger, was Horace Walpole.

* Chatham's letter, and Burke's highly characteristic comment, are published in Lord Albemarle's *Memoirs of Lord Rockingham*, vol. ii. pp. 193–195. "Looking over poor Lord Rockingham's 'papers,'" wrote Burke on July the 13th, 1792, "I find this letter from a man wholly unlike him. It concerns my pamphlet (*The Cause of the Discontents*). I remember to have seen this knavish letter at the time. The pamphlet is itself, by anticipation, an answer to that grand artificer of fraud. *He* would not like it. It is pleasant to hear him talk of the great extensive public, who never conversed but with a parcel of low toad-eaters. Alas! alas! How different the real from the ostensible public man! Must all this theatrical stuffing and raised heels be necessary for the character of a great man?"

"EDMUND BURKE."

"Oh! but this does not derogate from his great splendid side. God forbid!"

He must indeed have been acutely hurt ; for it induced this sensitive man of fashion to forget even his fear of ridicule and his dislike of vulgar democracy ; and deliberately to write for posterity his opinion that Mrs. Catherine Macaulay's principles were more fixed than Burke's, and that her work was even on the whole much superior. He knew that as long as this able answer to the enemies of the Rockingham party should exist, so long must his late actions, as an hereditary representative of orthodox Whiggism, appear absurd and indefensible. From the time when Lord Rockingham became Prime Minister, Horace had never been on good terms with the party. He had loudly professed to be an austere Cato, who had no selfish objects of ambition ; but when his friends, including Conway, entered office, he was vexed because they took him at his word. At least he thought his sinecure might have been settled upon him, so that no hostile Minister could in future distress him by detaining his balances. At least he might have had the opportunity of showing his virtue and disinterestedness by refusing some personal gratification. But his place remained subject to the same vicissitudes as before ; and no ministerial place was even for one moment offered for his acceptance or rejection. It is clear that, indifferent as he represented himself to be, he felt this neglect deeply ; and it is equally clear that he attributed it to Lord Rockingham. From this time he endeavoured to do his party all the injury he could, and never spoke of its virtuous and respectable leader but with the most jealous depreciation and profound detestation. He detached his friend Conway from the Marquis's side. It was his delight to thwart secretly every negotiation which might have brought the party back again to power on

honourable terms. His personal antipathy induced this hater of monarchy in the abstract, and of the Georges in particular, to contradict all his anti-monarchical sentiments, actually to become a King's friend, and to send officious messages through Lord Hertford to his Majesty about the best means of deceiving and perplexing Lord Rockingham and his followers, at the time when the Sovereign publicly pretended to request their services. Lord Rockingham is never afterwards mentioned by Walpole but as a poor creature, as the most inefficient of human beings; and every artifice of misrepresentation is employed in the Memoirs to make him appear at once odious and contemptible. This nobleman had offended Walpole on the side of his vanity; and the wounded cynic sacrificed all his devotion to truth as an historian, and to his political principles as a Whig, to the gratification of a petty rancour, which he pursued with the malignant energy of an eccentric and feeble character. It was not however so easy to answer Burke as to rail at Lord Rockingham. In his Memoirs, Walpole inflicts many pages on his readers, full of abuse of Burke, his work, and his noble friend; but the Thoughts remain uninjured by all this adverse criticism; and the witty and accomplished Horace only succeeds in being absolutely and supremely dull.*

Among many absurdities, in Walpole's opinion, the most absurd portion of the Thoughts was that which appeared to doubt of Lord Bute's present influence. This was a very remarkable omission in the age of which Burke wrote, when narrow prejudices and angry heats were so prevalent; but well-informed persons in the present day, instead of thinking this the most foolish part

* Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. iv. pp. 129-147.

of the work, will select it as the greatest proof of his singular knowledge and correct judgment in writing on his own times. That which Walpole calls "silly and impotent flattery, or still sillier credulity," was but the real fact: though the prejudices which Lord Bute had instilled into the King's mind could not be done away with, his personal influence over the Sovereign had long been at an end.

The reasons which led Burke to form the opinion he expressed are of little moment, and not easy to ascertain. He may have formed it from general observation, or from the direct information of Lord Holland, to whom he was undoubtedly introduced by young Charles Fox. The interview between Burke and Wilkes, in 1766, could have been scarcely less remarkable for its power of contrast than Burke's conversation with Henry Fox, who was the representative of the worst vices of Sir Robert Walpole's school of politicians, with all the more servile and more hateful vices of the King's friends engrafted on this old Whig stock. As such, Lord Holland in his old-age, when Burke became acquainted with him, was a moral and political phenomenon of no pleasing kind. Burke always loved to talk with veteran politicians about their conduct on the busy scene they had reluctantly relinquished to younger men; and Henry Fox, intent in obtaining an earldom, and with no nobler aspirations, with no friends, and with no principles, was an instructive study. Burke thoroughly understood him, though he did not understand Burke; as, indeed, what medium was there through which the author of the *Thoughts* could present himself to the intelligible recognition of this old, discarded, dishonoured, dissatisfied statesman? It was well that these men of opposite natures and of

different generations should meet each other, and, after making mutual observations which were far from favourable, each go on their separate ways.*

* "Mr. Burke was in the habit of seeing Lord Holland, to whom, I think, he was introduced very early by Charles Fox, and who remarked of him that he supposed he was a wonderfully clever man, but that he did not like those clever fellows who could not plainly say Yes or No to any question you asked them."—*Memoirs and Correspondence of Fox*, vol. i. p. 65.

CHAPTER XVI.

1770.

DURING A REACTION.

ALTHOUGH Lord Rockingham was anxious that the Thoughts on the Present Discontents should be ready before Parliament met, he was doomed to have his wishes disappointed. Passing through so many hands, it could not be early ready. The session did not open until a much later period than usual; but it was not until the 23rd of April, 1770, that the book was published. Why there should have been so long a delay, when we know that in the December of 1769 the pages had all been written, does not satisfactorily appear. Possibly a desire to avoid giving cause of complaint to Chatham until all parties in opposition had become a little more accustomed to act in concert, and had been pledged deeply to some common principles, may have kept back this immortal manifesto. While it was lying in proof, it was receiving illustration in Parliament; and its author, so calm and philosophical in his speculations, was energetically militant in his conduct. On the first night of the session he brought the Ministerial doctrine of expulsion and incapacitation to a practical issue, and boldly bade the Government and its reckless majority defiance.

Both in the debate on the Address and on the Re-

port, language such as had never before been heard in Parliament came from the lips of Sir George Savile. Burke supported and justified his friend with not less boldness and vehemence. They both confessed that, in treating the House of Commons with contempt, and arguing that, because the assembly had assumed powers which did not belong to it, it was sitting illegally, they deserved, according to the fashionable precedent, to be sent to the Tower. But they dared the Ministry to act up to the spirit of their former conduct, and commit them to confinement. The Cavendishes, and other gentlemen of the highest standing in the country, were prepared, under such circumstances, to avow the same sentiments, and to demand to share the same imprisonment. Such an act would have been equivalent to the incarceration of the whole Rockingham party, and the leaders of the City; and, supported as they were by their tenants and constituents, an appeal to the sword might have been imminent. As the Ministry durst not venture to take this decided step, their forced moderation proved clearly that Wilkes's persecution was owing to his bad character, and not merely to his unjustifiable actions as a partisan: what it would not bear from a libeller and blasphemer, the House was compelled to endure from the respected, wealthy, and highly-connected Sir George Savile. Burke was not however shielded by the same august qualifications. It was asked, did it become this Irish adventurer and disguised Papist to treat the House of Commons with such disrespect? Expecting that posterity would share in his indignation, Walpole has recorded the sentiment in an historical work, which was only to be published after his death; and it thus stands a living record of that patrician pride and narrow jea-

lousy, against which Burke, who was to be the greatest of Parliamentary authorities, had to struggle, before he could establish his just pretensions in the House of Commons.*

But such debating was no light matter. Lord North might try to turn their words into ridicule; but when men of such real moderation went beyond the vulgar demagogue in the strength of their language, and in showing their scorn of that House in which it was their delight to sit, there was evidently something seriously wrong in Government. The Duke of Grafton was intimidated. He had long spoken of resigning; and such conduct in gentlemen who had formerly been his friends, was not likely to render his position more comfortable. The re-appearance of Chatham on the scene, his decided and energetic language against all the recent policy of the Government, the resignations by which his declared hostility to the Ministry, and to the Sovereign personally, were immediately followed, the disavowal by the Lord Chancellor of the acts of his colleagues, and all the humiliating difficulties and tragical circumstances attending the attempt to find a fit successor to hold the Great Seal, separately, added to the first Minister's distress, and collectively, produced in his mind a positive panic. He precipitately resigned; and Lord North as precipitately found all his humility rewarded by the acceptance, at the earnest request of the King, who would otherwise have been compelled to send for either Lord Rockingham or Chatham, of the first place in the Government.

* "Did it become Burke, an Irish adventurer, to treat the House of Commons with such unexampled insolence?"—Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. iv. p. 42; Burke's Collected Speeches, vol. i. p. 26; Grenville Papers, vol. iv. p. 503.

Whether this change was advantageous to the country, may be a question. That it was advantageous for the mere convenience of official business, there can be no doubt. The Duke of Grafton, with all his moroseness, jealousy, and indolence, had, as his Memoirs show, some conscientiousness, and a sense of public responsibility. He felt too, as his resignation proved, that the personal approbation of the Sovereign was not a sufficient justification for measures which were injurious to the country, and that he might one day be called to a strict account for its disasters. Of this feeling his successor, with more tact, infinite wit, and excellent temper, was totally destitute; and his whole ministerial career, the most disgraceful, considering its extent, in the British annals, proves only how perniciously a statesman in a constitutional monarchy may act, when he sacrifices his own judgment and sense of duty to the personal inclinations and prejudices of his Sovereign.

Completely ignorant of the feelings of multitudes, George III. had much success in practising on the weakness of individuals. He knew Lord North well, and had at last, after many failures, found in him a Minister quite to his taste. The experience he had acquired in his intercourse with the Duke of Grafton, had improved the Royal perspicacity. He had found that a weak and indolent Minister whose opinions were not settled, was, of all politicians, the one likely to receive a bias from the more stubborn and resolute disposition of the Sovereign, and to constitute himself the mere instrument to carry his wishes into effect. A Grenville, a Chatham, or a Rockingham, had a judgment and will of his own, which he would not sacrifice even to that of an august master. His Majesty did not want a governor, but a tool; and

he found one sufficient for every purpose in Lord North.* In subordinate situations, this Minister had gained experience in conducting affairs. Easy, compliant, affable, and not deficient in resources, he could conciliate, if not convince. Sitting too in the House of Commons, he smoothed many obstacles in the course of Administration, almost as soon as they were raised; and, by his presence, had a direct influence over the deliberations in that more turbulent assembly, which never likes, as when the First Lord of the Treasury is in the other House, to receive its politics at second-hand.

In his personal appearance, indeed, there never was a Minister less graceful. He was more than awkward, he was ridiculously ungainly. His tongue was too large for his mouth, which opened very slowly. His eyes were too big for his head, though these optical organs were constitutionally deficient in power. His body set all proportion at defiance. Every motion was a roll, every expression a caricature. He had not yet obtained the blue ribbon, which in later years so constantly adorned his corpulent and unwieldy person, singling him out from his colleagues, and appearing to attract towards him all the thunderbolts of the Opposition. Neither had he yet grown so short-sighted as when, some years later, he carried the wig of a stooping colleague down the House on the point of his sword, and saw not the feat of arms he had performed, until the laughter from all sides greeted this unprecedented ministerial achievement. But, always goggling, snoring, and laughing, slovenly in dress and abstracted in manner, enjoying the jokes against

* The correspondence which Lord Brougham has published in his Appendix to the new edition of his Sketches, shows, in every line, the light in which George III. regarded his favourite Minister.

himself, and habitually joking at other people, it was scarcely possible to imagine a more ludicrous embodiment of the dignity which is supposed to belong to the first Minister of a great empire, and the tried leader of an enduring Ministry.*

These outward characteristics are not the indications of moral earnestness. It has long been the fashion to praise highly this Minister's sweetness of temper and amiableness of character, at the expense of those nobler endowments which ought alone to render a statesman worthy of approbation. Mankind are poorly compensated for the want of every great quality which ought to belong to their rulers in dangerous times, by easiness of disposition and the power of raising a laugh. One who does not feel much, will not always show much resentment, even under merited reproach; and every word that was uttered against the impolicy and incapacity of Lord North was most justly deserved. Nothing worse can surely be said of an English Minister than that, while he presided over the administration of affairs, he entered on a struggle in which success would have been more pernicious to his country than defeat; that by his erroneous policy, and gross mismanagement, the empire was sundered; and that, when foreign enemies had taken advantage of our domestic dissensions, when a hostile fleet was riding in the Channel, and when the nation was on the brink of ruin, under the strong reprobation his disgraces and disasters had called forth, he still kept his temper, and answered every grave remonstrance with a pleasant joke. All that was wanted to render the Minister's shame complete, is to find that for years he

* Walpole's George III.; Woodfall's Junius; Wraxall's Historical Memoirs; Burke's Collected Speeches, *passim*.

was sensible of the calamities he was inflicting, and of the hopelessness of the contest; but that he sacrificed his conviction to the obstinacy of his Sovereign.

In one of the first debates after Lord North's appointment, Burke characterized, in a simile, the duty the Minister was intended to perform. What was then prophecy, is now fact. Answering some remarks of Mr. Thomas Townshend on his ministerial position, Lord North had said that his friends and acquaintances in the Government were not—what most certainly they ought to have been—a little knot of men united in the same opinions. He had risen, he affirmed, to the station he occupied, because he had had a great many friends in various connections; and he considered himself then, and desired to continue, as unattached as any man could be. He appeared to think that official weight, without public policy or similarity of sentiment, was all that it was necessary for the Ministry to possess.* Burke replied that, in his opinion, the man who would consent to act with people he did not know, until he could hold on no longer, acted on the most dangerous of all principles. Lord North might suppose this to be duty; but he was only pursuing the common road of worldly ambition, despoiled of all dignity. In the tempest and tornado of the Court, he would be advanced as the silken, bending, obsequious willow, yielding to every blast.† It is now generally known, that Lord North had little influence over his colleagues, and less over his Sovereign. During his long tenure of office, his Government was, more than any other since the days of William III., an administration of different departments without any effective head. Yet at no time was a real, and not a nominal

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 439.

† *Ibid.*, p. 441.

head, more necessary; at no time did England more imperatively require a wise Minister to lead, instead of one who, while appearing to direct, in reality only followed. It was by Jenkinson, coming from the King's closet with downcast eyes and stealthy steps, and by the jovial party that met at the Pay Office, where the hazard-table was spread out, the dice rattled, and the wine flowed, that everything was decided beforehand for this easy and careless First Minister, whose good temper was more pernicious to his country than the most deliberate malice of a Borgia or a Catiline could have been.

But, for the moment, the Duke of Grafton's resignation, and the speedy choice of his successor, had had an effect which could scarcely have been anticipated. It diverted the violence of the storm from one devoted individual, whose resignation was expected to carry along with it the resignation of the whole Government; and being quite unforeseen, disconcerted the Opposition. The session went on much more quietly, and the efforts of the Rockinghams and the Grenvilles appeared to have relaxed.

Burke shared in this momentary apathy. Though several questions in which he and his party must have taken much interest were discussed, though he had frequently been reproached with speaking on almost every occasion, yet several debates occurred in which his name does not once appear. Mrs. Burke was suffering from a long and severe illness, in which both her health and spirits were painfully reduced;* and this domestic anxiety may have for a short time compelled her husband to suspend his public exertions. But, whatever was the cause, it is certain that on Dowdeswell's motion for dis-

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 114.

qualifying revenue officers from voting at elections, which was supported by the whole strength of the Opposition ; on the debate about the right of a member to have a complicated question separated, which produced a dispute with the Speaker and an adjourned discussion ; and on Lord North's important motion for a partial repeal of Charles Townshend's only too celebrated American Revenue Act of 1767, when the Opposition proposed an amendment for the total abolition of the duties, and upheld their proposal by a powerful minority, there is no evidence, either in Cavendish or any other Parliamentary record, that Burke ever opened his lips.

One little exception however to this unusual taciturnity is very remarkable. When he first came to England, the exportation of corn was so great as to amount nearly to one hundred thousand quarters a year. As the population increased, this excess, during these twenty years, had gradually diminished. With the extension of manufacturers, and the growth of our commerce, the necessity of importation instead of exportation began to be seen. Before the principle was established, and the want of food publicly admitted, many crude proposals were made in Parliament. On the 28th of February the House went into committee on the Corn Trade : a motion and an amendment were made ; and in answer to Mr. Thomas Townshend, junior, who wished to permit the exportation of malt, and to restrain that of barley and wheat, Burke expressed some opinions, which he himself confessed would be thought absurd paradoxes, but the value of which the present generation can fully recognize. "There is no such thing," he said, "as the landed interest separate from the trading interest. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. He who separates the

interest of the consumer from the interest of the grower starves the country. Turn your land into trade. Export, that you may keep your corn at home. Make things dear, that they may be cheap."*

As the hopes in which he may have indulged of a change of Ministry gradually subsided with every week of the session, he thought but of proclaiming truth and advancing justice. The endeavours of Chatham and his faithful devotee, the Mayor Beckford, to keep the flame of agitation alive, which seemed about to expire for want of combustible materials, were far from agreeable to Burke and the moderate members of the party. Such actions contradicted all their ideas of political propriety, and shocked their notions of personal respect for the Sovereign, which, in the heat of opposition, they were ever desirous of preserving. Chatham's wild language found little approbation from them, and in fact cannot be justified. He who had formerly declared that Lord Rockingham and the Whig aristocracy should not dictate to the King, now forgot all the monarchical professions he had so ostentatiously made, accused the Sovereign openly of deceit and falsehood, and saw nothing wrong in Beckford and his City friends insulting George III. to his face.†

On the 14th of March, a pompous cavalcade, with Beckford in all his glory, accompanied by crowds of people whose applauding shouts shook the windows of the palace, arrived at St. James's. The Mayor and Sheriffs presented to the King what they called the humble address, remonstrance, and petition of the City of London; but in the humility there was not a little

* Cavendish, vol. i. p. 476.

† Chatham Correspondence, vol. iii.

arrogance. The Sovereign, from his throne, read an answer which had been carefully prepared, and in which the magistrates were told that their remonstrance was disrespectful, injurious, and unconstitutional.

The next day Sir Thomas Clavering, a Member who generally voted with the Opposition, but who was anxious to serve his family by currying favour with the King, moved that the remonstrance should be laid before the House. Beckford and Trecothick, Townshend and Sawbridge, avowed the share they had in the paper, and showed themselves very anxious to suffer patriotic martyrdom. Lord North, instead of soothing the ferment by his speech, only poured oil upon the flame, and appeared prepared to act with equal rashness as when he led the House in the violent persecution of Wilkes. In this emergency Burke stood forward pre-eminently as the adviser of moderation, and extorted the applause of his bitterest enemies by the firmness and dignity with which he interposed between the rash tribunes of the Guildhall, who were eager to suffer, and the rash courtiers who were anxious to please the Monarch by proposing the committal of the Mayor, Sheriffs, and Aldermen to prison; and of course, as a consequence of their conduct, expelling them from Parliament. Again, as in every stage of the proceedings against Wilkes, he entreated the House to pause, and to consider well the consequences of what they were doing. On the question whether the remonstrance were becoming or not, he begged to preserve the most perfect silence. But he could never consider the actions on both sides during Civil War without remembering the words Peace! Peace! which were ever on Falkland's lips. He had acted on one simple rule throughout the whole business of Wilkes: he believed that the extreme powers

of Government should never be employed except for an adequate object; and thought that the neglect of this consideration had produced all the alarming circumstances in which the Ministry was now placed. He reminded the House of what he had said in the course of the last session, and showed, in a manner which might have brought conviction to the most stolid understanding, how much evil had arisen from disregarding the warnings he had so repeatedly and so earnestly given.*

This speech did produce conviction in quarters to which he generally appealed in vain. The country gentlemen took no pleasure in the violent exercise of Parliamentary powers; and of their want of sympathy with the Court and the Government in these matters, Johnson, who in January had published his *False Alarm*, seriously complains.† The zeal of the Tory landowners for George III. was yet but lukewarm; they did not consider the cause of the Ministry as their own, or feel themselves bound in honour to support every measure which the Government recommended. As a party, they had not yet come forth again into individual life, though every means was employed to effect this resurrection; and the country gentlemen gave Lord North very unequivocally to understand that they would not support him in any strong measures. The papers were voted, and the next day an address to the Throne was proposed; but it was well known that the courtiers could go no further. Lord North, as Prime Minister, was now more ready to employ the golden bridge which Burke always offered him for retreat, than he had been when he was, under another chief, merely leader of the House of Commons. It is

* Cavendish, vol. i. pp. 524-26; Walpole's *George III.*, vol. iv. p. 104.

† Johnson's *Works*, vol. viii.

not going too far to ascribe to the firm and temperate manner in which Burke spoke concerning the remonstrance of the City, not only when it was first discussed, but when it was afterwards taken into consideration, the abandonment of the outrageous policy which had been pursued ever since the December of 1768, and which at length began to be discountenanced on both sides of the House. This was a great victory; though Chatham might sneer at what he called moderate Whigs and temperate statesmen, and though the Mayor and Sheriffs, Horne Tooke and Mrs. Macaulay, might denounce the Rockingham party as an unsympathizing aristocracy, and declare open war against the whole body.

The reaction had begun. The minds of men were calming. On the very day when the citizens were shouting round the carriages of the Mayor and Sheriffs as they were going to read their reprimand to their Sovereign, Burke's friend, Sir William Meredith, was condemning in the House a libellous paper called *The Whisperer*, which had been started against the Government, and was most scurrilously indecent and offensive. A debate then arose about libels in general. Mr. Thomas Townshend, junior, hoped that prosecutions against the press would not be confined to the papers against the Ministry; mentioned the *False Alarm*, in which the author had certainly attacked the Opposition with all that contemptuous virulence with which, in his pamphlets and in conversation, he was accustomed to treat his political adversaries; and classed Johnson and Shebbeare together as Jacobite pensioners, writing in the cause of the Government, and heaping calumnies on its opponents. Burke warmly defended Johnson, and pronounced a panegyric upon the old moralist as a model of sterling

integrity. For doing this he incurred the censure of the warm patriots of the City, who could not understand how he could respect the genius and the character of the sturdy champion of genuine Toryism.*

Burke had soon however to defend himself from much more violent abuse than had been cast upon Johnson. His calumniator was one of those newly-converted Tories and country gentlemen who, in general, were the supporters of the Government, though they occasionally delighted in showing their independence. One of these occasions they seized when Grenville brought in his celebrated bill for the trial of disputed elections, which was opposed by Lord North and the courtiers, but supported by many who sat on their side of the House, and by all parties in opposition. This Bill, though complicated in some of its details, was a great improvement on the state of things which it superseded;

* As Burke's speech on this occasion has not been found in Cavendish, the most recent and the most ingenious of Goldsmith's biographers has concluded that this alleged defence was never made. I have much pleasure in giving the following extract from a publication to which I shall afterwards allude, and which, by contemporary evidences, establishes the fact of Burke's defence of Johnson beyond all reasonable doubt. "An exceptionable passage in the conduct of Junius (Burke) is doubtless the panegyric he lavished before a great assembly on the flagitious author of an infamous pamphlet, entitled *The False Alarm*; a pedantic pedagogue, who, after having spent half a century of his life in cultivating a rooted antipathy to the family on the throne, and the most rancorous abuse of the Hanover succession, had accepted of that gratuitous emolument from the Crown which he had constantly stigmatized as the wages of iniquity; and, in his old-age, most servilely prostituted his pen for that wretched hire he had so long and so loudly condemned. And yet, because this formal pedant could expatiate on trifles, swell insignificance by amplification, give verbosity to sense, and pomposity to sound, he was defended by Junius (Burke) as a paragon of integrity, as if men of letters were privileged to betray their country, and the superior knowledge of what is right entitles men to do wrong."—*Anecdotes of Junius*, 1771, p. 15..

and though the arrangement it introduced could not secure justice through the fierce storms of party which set in with the great Coalition, yet as one of the last legacies Grenville left to the House of Commons that he loved with such undivided affection, it is deserving of respectful remembrance.

It was cordially supported in all its stages by Burke. On the third reading, Sir William Bagot, the Member for Staffordshire, desired the Opposition to take notice how differently he and his friends acted to the ordinary opposers of the Ministry. He supported the Bill on its own merits. He did not care for eloquence and learning, and he hinted, in a manner which Burke could not but apply to himself, that the less the House had of such ornaments the better. What the country required was, not orators, nor lawyers, nor adventurers, but country gentlemen.

Burke spoke after the polite Sir William. With much temper he submitted, that Parliament was not merely constituted for the landed interest, and that the boroughs themselves witnessed the necessity of commercial representation. Entering into this constitutional distinction, he reminded his opponent who was so happy in his acres, that there had only been one Parliament from which learned gentlemen of the robe had been excluded; and of this precedent, which gloried in the distinction of being the *Parliamentum Indoctum*, Sir William might have the undisputed advantage. Comparing the benefits which the country received from the unactuated load of landed property with that derived from mental acquirements, he contended that talent, as well as land, was necessary in the representation; that they both might be separately injurious; but that the nation could only be prosperous,

and the representation complete, when, like quicksilver joined with a more solid metal, they formed a happy amalgamation. This reply must have been most effective; for Sir William was himself conscious of the ridiculous figure he had made.

He went down to the House in a rage two days after the last discussion; and when Grenville moved that his Bill should pass, Sir William relieved his mind by delivering a coarse invective against Burke, whom he believed to have insulted, in his person, all the country gentlemen of England. Property must have been permitted to take considerable liberties with Intellect, even by the Speaker of the House of Commons; for the Member for Staffordshire, without interruption, characterized the Member for Wendover as a black Jesuit, who had been educated at St. Omer, and who was only fit to be secretary to an inquisition for burning heretics. Intellect was however both able and willing to protect itself; and Burke, without getting into a passion, soon had his rude antagonist at his mercy. He declared his political creed, such as we now know it to have been; and other distinguished Members of the House, affected by his eloquence, followed his example by making a similar confession of faith, and by abjuring Lord Bute and all his evil works.*

But the storm of calumny raged furiously. Every day the press contained some abuse of the Irish Papist and the Jesuit of St. Omer. The attack by Sir William Bagot in the House, stamped with a kind of authority what had hitherto passed unregarded in the newspapers, whose slanderous scurrility then exceeded all former ex-

* Parliamentary History, vol. xvi. p. 294. Collected Speeches, vol. i. pp. 38-40. Correspondence, vol. i. p. 301.

perience. It seems also to have inspired Burke's friends with the desire of doing something to oppose the hurricane at which he was himself quite unmoved. On the 10th of April there appeared, in the London Evening Post, a short narrative of Burke's life, evidently written by some one well acquainted with him; for not only is the account of his origin and education correct, but even the nature of his quarrel with Hamilton accurately stated. It was followed on the 17th by another letter from a different correspondent, who signed himself Eusebius, and introduced a long paper, full of most important details, on Burke's private history. This communication, with the introductory letter, filled two columns. It was printed in large leaded type, and appeared in the most conspicuous part of the newspaper. The correspondent who, as Eusebius, ushered it into the world, stated that it was a genuine character, drawn by an Irish gentleman of distinguished learning, abilities, and integrity, who had been intimately acquainted with Burke during the progressive stages of his education, and in his later life; that it had not however been intended for publication, but only written for the satisfaction of some private friend in Ireland, from whom it had been directly obtained.* The paper which follows was the composition of Shackleton. In many respects it is a just delineation of Burke. It also states his birth and parentage, where he had been educated, whom he had married, and in what religion he had been brought up. His wife is said to be "a genteel, well-bred woman, of the Roman faith;" but a note is added in italics, informing the public that she had since

* London Evening Post, from Saturday, April 14th, to Tuesday, April 17th, 1770.

conformed to the Church of England. The phraseology is peculiar and characteristic of Shackleton ; but the tone of the letter is excellent, affectionate, and generous.

This account of the remarkable testimony of Shackleton, in favour of his illustrious friend, shows in itself that there has been a serious mistake in the representation which has been given of the document, and other circumstances attending its publication. It has been said that Shackleton, being in London during this April, was so much affected by the calumnious misstatements then current about Burke's relations and principles, that without consulting him, he wrote a long letter to the newspaper, stating the real facts of the case ; that Burke was much annoyed at the manner in which his wife and himself were thus exhibited to the view of the public ; and that he wrote an angry letter to the schoolmaster, rebuking him for his interference.* But nothing is clearer on the face of the two compositions, than that Shackleton was not the person who published them ; that they were published without his knowledge ; and that the paper which he drew up was not intended to be published. Neither indeed are the errors consistent. If Shackleton had not authorized the publication, why should Burke have been angry with his friend ? If Shackleton were in London at the time, why should Burke, whose principle it was never to write to a man with whom he could converse, have written to him upon the subject at all ? Shackleton, from his Memoirs and Letters, seems not even to have been in London during this April ;† and when so many of the collateral circumstances are proved to be erroneous, until that very angry letter shall itself be produced, although

* Prior, p. 117.

† Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton, p. 56.

some such epistle must really have been written, the statement that has hitherto been given of it cannot but at best appear rather mythical. Burke might regret that any person should be so officious as, without his knowledge, to make a parade of his private life ; but there was nothing in the circumstances, as they appear in the original documents, to induce him to quarrel with Shackleton, and to wound the feelings of his dearest friend in Ireland.

His national sympathies were at this time somewhat strongly excited. Calumny and insult did not deter this Irish adventurer from advocating the cause of his country, and of the distant dependencies of England. Before the close of this unsatisfactory session, which confounded all the calculations of the Opposition, the affairs of Ireland and America were the subjects of debate and the themes of Burke's eloquence. Both these discussions mark degrees in the ascending scale of Irish nationality and of American freedom.

Lord Townshend had gone to Ireland as a more permanent resident governor than that kingdom had hitherto possessed. The trade of the undertakers was over, and these obsolete statesmen, with the aristocracy who had depended upon them, only thought of embarrassing the operations of a Government to which they were no longer necessary. Their discreditable manœuvres about the Octennial Bill were turned against themselves. The measure passed ; they found themselves annihilated as politicians ; and over their graves slowly arose their country's liberty. The new elections caused a thrill of strange and unexpected joy ; but the fair prospect was soon overcast. Burke took but a moderate share in the exultation of his countrymen ; for he saw that unless the chains could be removed from the limbs of the majority,

their Helotism would only increase with the liberties of the minority. There is much sad significance in the advice he wrote to the Nagles in the south of Ireland, at the time when the elections for the first Octennial Parliament were going on. He told them not to busy themselves in political contests, in which, as a mere struggle between Protestants and Protestants, they had no interest whatever.* The Parliament no sooner met than a dispute arose on the interpretation of the statute of Henry VII., called Poyning's Law: the old maxims of the Privy Council could not be expected to accommodate themselves to the new freedom: promises which pledged the Sovereign to maintain a certain force in Ireland as a recompense for the increased votes on the military defences, were regarded in England as unconstitutional: much shameful disingenuousness was displayed by the Lord Lieutenant in getting the supplies voted before he showed his displeasure: and as soon as this duty had been performed, the whole kingdom, lately so happy at the prospect of its acquired privileges, was surprised and enraged by the angry prorogation of the two Houses.

On the 3rd of May, 1770, a novel debate on the sudden prorogation of the Irish Parliament occurred in the English House of Commons. The result of the discussion was, of course, of little moment: the precedent was highly important. English Whigs blaming the mis-government of a foolish Lord Lieutenant, and looking upon the wrongs of the Irish people as their own, was an unmistakable sign of great progress, and a good omen

* " You are, I suppose, full of bustle in your new elections. I am convinced all my friends will have the good sense to keep themselves from taking any part in struggles in the event of which they have no share and no concern."—Burke to Garret Nagle, March 6, 1768. New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 386.

of the future. Burke spoke at a late hour, when Members who had dined were crowding into the House to vote on a question which they had not troubled themselves to hear argued. He sarcastically said, amid their ebullitions of impatience, that he would give them a little information. The Government knew nothing of Ireland: but were they not paid that they should know their politics? Want of wisdom was a crime in those who governed. He denied that by Poyning's Law it was incumbent on the Irish Parliament to certify the heads of a Money Bill before considering the other reasons for which they were called together. After commenting on the conduct of the Lord Lieutenant, and the folly which had induced the Ministry, immediately after granting a people new privileges, to frustrate all the objects for which these rights had been conferred, he thanked the more riotous of his audience for giving him their attention after dinner, and informed them that before dinner on the next Wednesday he would put their patience to another trial, on a matter which, like that then under consideration, would doubtless be ascribed to faction.

This was a series of resolutions on American affairs, of which he had given notice, and which he was to move that afternoon. News had recently arrived that, in the streets of Boston, there had been a conflict between the troops and the inhabitants; and that, for the sake of quiet, the commanding officer had ordered his soldiers to evacuate the town. To Burke and his friends, everything that the Ministers did, and everything they left undone, in this American business, through a total want of policy, either in repression or in conciliation, portended a civil war. The strong measure of overawing the people of Boston by the presence of troops, had

failed ; it had produced only disaster, defeat, and humiliation. What was now to be done ? At all events, a Member of Opposition, anxious for the future, though unable to obtain a victory over the Ministry, could relieve his own conscience and his sense of responsibility, during the long months which must elapse before Parliament again met, by taking one of the last opportunities before the prorogation, of bringing the whole subject before the House, and emphatically expressing his sentiments.

This Burke did. In a speech of great power, he moved eight resolutions, condemning the whole conduct of the Ministry on the colonial measures during the last two years, and proposing a total reversal of their policy. The motion was, of course, not carried ; nor was it expected to be carried. The gallery of the House was locked. All strangers were driven from the lobby. The ministerial majority was great. The accents of the ardent orator's voice, as in an eloquent peroration he called upon the Commons to awake to the condition of the troops, to awake to the dignity of their Sovereign, to awake to their own honour, fell on inattentive ears, and died hopelessly away. As the most appropriate comment on Burke's earnest appeals to the House to awake, when blood had been shed, Government had been defied, and the integrity of a noble Empire was threatened, the first Minister of the Crown immediately dropped off to sleep. Lord North's slumbers were only disturbed by the laughter which arose when William Burke, who supported his kinsman in the debate, regretted that none of the Minister's colleagues had one of Swift's flappers to keep him awake to American affairs. Posterity might, on ordinary occasions, also join in the

laugh at Lord North's somnolency ; but after so great a speech as Burke had then made, and when the emergency was so grave and imminent, on finding the Minister sleeping throughout the debate, indignation extinguishes every feeling of the ludicrous. He knew that his position was secure. Though Grenville, in the last speech he was ever to make in the House of Commons, supported Burke's motion, their combined forces only amounted to seventy-nine; and Lord North might, without much fear of a day of reckoning, slumber throughout the recess, with rebellion approaching.*

Burke returned to the country and enjoyed some months of total relaxation. It was long since he had been able to take an interval of rest ; but this occasion he greedily seized. In wandering among his fields, making his hay, trying experiments, studying the best works on the theory and practice of agriculture, and reading, in the evening, books of general literature, the summer was pleasantly employed. Even his correspondence was less active than ordinarily. The most important letter he wrote during this quiet season, was in August, to Shackleton. There are no traces in it of any recent acrimonious communications ; Burke even appears to apologize for neglect in not writing more frequently ; and recapitulates all the incidents in his private life which he thinks interesting, in a manner somewhat at variance with the supposition of his correspondent having only four months previously visited England. His wife had had a long illness, but was recovering. His brother, though in indifferent health, had been compelled by the Ministry to return to his post in the West Indies, and his friends shortly expected to hear of

* Cavendish, vol. ii. pp. 14-25.

his safe arrival in Granada. The book on the Public Discontents had been very favourably received ; and the only party really enraged with the publication was the Society of the Bill of Rights, which, by its violence and folly, had done infinite mischief to the common cause. These are the topics on which Burke writes to Richard Shackleton, as to one who was a stranger both to the domestic events which had lately occurred in his household, and to the political circumstances of the hour.*

In his letters to Lord Rockingham during the autumn, Burke commented still more strongly on the proceedings of the popular confederation. He was supremely disgusted ; and this impression was never afterwards effaced. The patriots were quarrelling among themselves ; and the Society which was to reform the whole empire, was hastening to its own destruction. “*Sit illâ terrâ levis !*” said Burke, as he contemplated this impending dissolution. He thought that, with such different intentions, there was much resemblance in the characters of the factions of the Court and the City : they played into each other’s hands ; and they respected each other more than either of them could respect moderate politicians who stood between them, and whose only desire was to see just principles of Government in the ascendant. Lord John Cavendish wanted him, under these circumstances, to write something more on the general principles of the connection ; and Burke’s observations on this intimation illustrate the difficulties which his party and his own writings frequently met before they could receive a candid interpretation. It was, he said, a business of great delicacy, and not a mere matter of account and calculation ; it was a talk of liberty and

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 114.

popularity in which nonsense would always distance reason and experience.

The day before he expressed this emphatic opinion, a sloop-of-war had arrived off Portsmouth, bringing news of serious import to all who were anxious for the honour of the country. It was concealed from the public for the moment; but the outward indications of alarm which it produced soon excited attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

1770-1771.

FOR THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS.

Why, in the month of September, 1770, are the workmen so busy in the dockyards? Why is there so much alarm and hurry at head-quarters? While endeavouring to fatten hogs on boiled carrots, sending his carts with vegetables to Covent-Garden Market, or glancing in an evening over a remarkable letter to Almon on judges and juries, law and libels, a subject which the prosecution of the booksellers and publishers of Junius's Letter to the King had brought into controversy, and which in the next session would be amply discussed, Burke could not refrain from speculating on the object of the armaments the Government was fitting out. Could the French squadron have sailed to the Archipelago? Could that blow which Lord Chatham, with all the mystery of an oracle, had in the House of Lords recently declared to be somewhere impending, really have been struck?

All doubts were soon set at rest. Hostilities had really begun. The passions of Englishmen became fixed on some barren islands, beaten by storms, and inhabited only occasionally by wild geese, lying between fifty and fifty-two degrees of latitude, in the South Seas. Their countrymen had been violently expelled from a settlement; their flag had been lowered; a Spanish governor

had seized on what had been considered British possessions; for many days the rudder of the English ship had been detained before she was permitted to return home; and all England rung with rumours of a Spanish war, and the name of the Falkland Isles. Domestic disputes were suddenly suspended. Parliament was early and unexpectedly summoned. Burke participated in the general indignation. He studied maps, geographies, and all narratives of voyagers, for correct information on the subject; and afterwards gave so full and luminous a history of these islands in *The Annual Register*, that historians have at his expense made a marvellous display of learning, charitably taking his information, illustrations, and references, without ever troubling themselves or their readers with any tedious acknowledgments.*

When on the 13th of November he had again taken his place in the House of Commons, he was not less energetic. The cause of dispute might seem trifling; but the manner in which the English troops had been expelled from Port Egmont, admitted of no excuse. It was clear that this was one of the occasions when, so long as the honour of nations is something more than an unmeaning phrase, a sovereign of a great empire can have no alternative but to insist on complete reparation, or to declare war. George III. was seized with an unwonted military ardour; and the Government perhaps acted with as much courage and decision as the circumstances allowed. But the Opposition, not unnaturally, distrusted the sincerity of the Ministers, and considered the decided language of the King's Speech as the mere cloak of feeble counsels.

* See *Annual Register*, 1771, c. i. pp. 1-7.

Death had been busy during the recess. On that evening the Members who crowded the House might painfully regret the absence of three distinguished persons who would not willingly have been away at such a moment. Beckford, after presenting another remonstrance, and, contrary to all precedent, lecturing the King, had been thrown into a fever from excitement, had caught cold in the country, whither he had gone for quiet, and had suddenly died. Grenville, on the very morning of the meeting of Parliament, had also expired. Lord Granby, too, the popular general, on whom Chatham only a few months before had exerted so many disingenuous artifices to induce him to resign his post of Commander-in-Chief, had also departed ; and when war was believed to be all but inevitable, the jovial, handsome face, and bald, shining, happy forehead of this gallant and good-natured soldier were probably more missed than the less pleasing, though more earnest features of the two distinguished civilians who had been so indefatigable in former sessions, and who, before the late prorogation, appeared to count so confidently upon the future.*

The tone of the debate was decidedly warlike. Members spoke as though hostilities were only delayed on both sides ; and the premature death of the Marquis of Granby was universally lamented. Who was now, asked Barré, to command the army? Were they to leave everything to the Secretary at War, whose contradictory letters had almost occasioned the loss of Gibraltar, and whose epistles were only clear and precise when he had to thank the soldiers for massacring the citizens ? This

* In his last speech, Grenville had spoken of what he would do in the next session.

attack called up Lord Barrington, who reflected on Burke for bringing forward his former resolutions on the riot in St. George's Fields, and assumed that the House shared the responsibility with himself, since they had rejected that factious motion by so powerful a majority. As for the fit person to command the army, he seemed to think that a matter of little consequence, and spoke as though there was no officer at that time worthy of the appointment. With the grossest imprudence and almost childish folly, he added some observations which he afterwards regretted with tears in his eyes. The Government, he said, would do well enough. As an old woman and a quack doctor could cure the ague, so the Adjutant-General and himself could take care of the army.*

Burke, indignant that his former conduct should be misrepresented by the Secretary at War, and himself mentioned as a child of faction, spoke with warmth immediately after Barrington. He assured the House that he did not rise to accept the nomination of Commander-in-Chief. He appealed to the recollections of friends and foes to decide on the spirit and manner in which he had made the motion that the Minister now imputed to faction. He was in no hurry for war. He knew that it put to hazard all the accumulated glory of England; that a storm of wind and drift of snow might be the means of destroying a nation; that after an army had with every precaution been sent out, a woman, a rustic, a child might be the cause of its defeat. It was easy to talk of war, and to talk of peace; but the House ought not to go into war blindfolded, nor before the grounds of hostilities had been distinctly laid down.

* *Cavendish*, vol. ii. p. 46.

The Ministers ought to explain their conduct. Papers should be laid upon the table. The complaints of British subjects in the colonies and at home should be redressed, so that the nation might meet its enemies as one man.*

Lord Barrington attempted to explain, that what he said about faction did not apply to Burke's motion, which he confessed to have been regular and parliamentary; but even he seemed to have no hope of an amicable arrangement. The address was agreed to without a division, and Dowdeswell, as leader of the Rockingham party, gave notice of a motion for papers.

But in truth this question, though making so much noise at the time, has for us very little interest. A short conversation which occurred on the 16th of November, about the exportation of corn, has, like the few words on the same subject in the preceding session, a value and importance which were not then appreciated, and of which these long discussions on the Falkland Isles are entirely destitute. The Prohibitory Bill of the last session was to be continued for an indefinite period; and country Members, astute Colonels, and Government officials, expressed themselves in a manner little creditable either to their political or economical knowledge.

Burke was again the great but disregarded instructor. He was astonished that Lord North should argue that the burden of proof rested on those who objected to perpetuate without alteration a temporary law. The Minister was unacquainted even with the grammar of legislation. It was not enough to answer that the law was in the same words as the Act of last year. The Member for Wendover wanted reasons for this prohi-

* Cavendish, vol. ii. pp. 46-50. Collected Speeches, vol. i. pp. 50-59.

bitory policy. The officials however only answered him with forms and arguments founded on the order of proceeding. Replying again to Dyson and Cowper, Burke said that if order were meat, drink, and clothing, everything might be perfectly clear. Ministers now made Acts of Parliament that were not only not intended for permanency, but were not even annual. They locked and unlocked ports as it suited their momentary convenience, and, so far from looking through centuries, could not look through a single session. On the same principle as they prevented the distillation of wheat, they ought to prevent horses from eating oats, and manufactures from being conveyed out of the country; for he would live and die in the principle that corn was itself a manufacture, making every grain ten times its value; and that if the ground was only allowed to supply food for men, the prohibition went against flax, against timber, against everything. Colonel Onslow, with his usual forwardness and insolence, hinted broadly that the reason why Burke wanted corn to be exported, was, that faction might be promoted by a scarcity of food, and that a famishing people might rise in insurrection. Burke rejoined, with much scorn, that he could scarcely be courting vulgar approbation, since there was not a street porter who read a newspaper on a bulk, who had not the same ideas on the question as his Majesty's Ministers.*

Some days afterwards, on a motion of Dowdeswell for the correspondence before the seizure of the Falkland Islands, young Charles Fox, in an intrepid, able, and animated speech, moved the previous question. Burke did not rise until a late hour; but he immediately complimented Fox as one whose aptitude for public business

* Cavendish, vol. ii. pp. 55-57.

had outgrown his years. He entered into a wide field of discussion, and alluded to the great question of law and libels, which had forced itself on the attention of Parliament. Conway had especially distinguished himself in throwing on the House of Commons the responsibility of the ministerial policy; and with his usual infelicity imputed, as others had previously done, the outcry of the people to the effects of faction. The Commons, said Burke, with heavy burdens on their own backs, were ready to take upon them that of the Government. They cried, in answer to all remonstrances, “Their blood be on us, and on our children!” “But take care, Gentlemen,” he added; “this is a burden you may not be able to bear!” The General, who was so ready to attack others, was ever deeply hurt at the slightest reflection upon himself, and again springing up, as soon as Burke had concluded, he observed that it was cruel, it was hard, thus to be personally called upon. He never thought that all the honourable Member’s friends were factious. On the contrary, he still loved and respected the family: the family of course meant the Cavendishes; but the exception implied that Conway had ceased to love and respect Lord Rockingham and Burke. The stream of Court favour had carried the helpless soldier far from his old friends; and though he might plunge desperately about, and beat the waters with his hands, he had neither strength nor courage to oppose the current.*

How little the Rockingham party deserved to be regarded as an unprincipled faction, the next important debate clearly demonstrated. The first great discussion of the session on the law of libel, occurred on the 27th

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 88.

of November, when the Honourable Constantine Phipps moved for leave to bring in a bill more effectually to prevent malicious informations. Fortune had made this gentleman a naval officer: Nature had intended him for a lawyer; and the display of his passion for legal matters occasioned much surprise and amusement to his friends. He had also two voices; the one peculiarly gentle in its tone, the other as peculiarly harsh; and he alternately attracted by the sweetness of the one, and repelled by the gruffness of the other. He managed, even when opposed to lawyers of great attainments, to argue ably against *ex officio* informations, and fully tasked the powers of the Attorney and Solicitor Generals. Burke spoke with much eloquence, but was far from going to the same lengths as Junius in the newspapers, and Serjeant Glyn in the House. Chatham, who watched the debate from under the gallery, was much offended with this moderation. Eager to make this legal question the instrument of a personal attack on Lord Mansfield, the great Earl wrote indignantly to a friend, that if Burke's ideas on juries and judges were generally adopted by the party, he would separate himself at once and for ever from so unorthodox a congregation. Interest could not keep Burke and Chatham together, nor induce them to make allowances for each other: it is curious to see on almost every occasion the natural antagonism of these two men continually breaking out.*

But though Chatham at the time condemned this speech for its moderation, an incorrect report of the same oration has been made the foundation of some heavy charges against Burke, for intemperately praising, to serve party

* Chatham's Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 32. Burke's Correspondence, vol. i. p. 241.

purposes, an anonymous libeller whom every good man ought to have severely condemned.* In the speech, as first reported by William Woodfall, in his *Vox Senatus*, and as copied into the Parliamentary History and into the collected edition of the statesman's speeches, Burke, after strongly censuring Junius's Letter to the King, the venom and rancour of which he declared had made his blood run cold, is represented as praising the writer whom he had just censured, as complimenting him for his boldness and sagacity, and as regretting that the House had not the benefit of his knowledge, firmness, and integrity.† This contradiction has struck many persons. But it now appears that Mr. Woodfall's report of this speech is imperfect, that the censure of Junius was alone correctly given, and that the praise in the subsequent portion of the speech was not intended for this writer, but for the author of one of the two letters to Almon which had been published in the summer, and ascribed to Camden and Dunning. The correction of this misrepresentation was accomplished by Mr. Wright, the editor of the printed Cavendish Reports; and it is not the only dark insinuation against Burke's memory which the publication of those debates has triumphantly dispelled.‡ No man that ever lived was less inclined than he to encourage compositions which seemed inspired not by a sense of public duty, but by a desire to give pain. One who neither admired nor respected him has justly admitted, in reference to this subject, that "he was not a man addicted to malignity."§ The very day after this debate, instead of stirring up the bitter waters of strife, he was

* Lord Brougham's *Statesmen of the Reign of George III.*, vol. ii.

† *Collected Speeches*, vol. i. pp. 63, 64.

‡ *Cavendish*, vol. ii. p. 107.

§ *Walpole's George III.*, vol. iv.

busy in making peace between two incensed politicians, whose enmity would have been rather advantageous than otherwise to his party's interests.

The time had come when Grenville's bill for determining election petitions by a Select Committee, was to be brought into practice. The courtiers, disliking the law, wished its inefficiency to be made apparent, and were even suspected of attempting to make a particular case to which its provisions might not apply. There had been a double return for Scarborough; and in a conversation that ensued, Rigby and Dyson unhesitatingly declared their opinions against the bill of the last summer. Wedderburne warmly defended this favourite measure of his departed leader, whose name had been freely mentioned on both sides. Charles Fox, with his usual frankness and ardour, made some observations not so respectful to Grenville as his friends thought due to one who was no more. Wedderburne again descanted on the deceased statesman's merit, and expressed his surprise that Fox could speak as he had done without feeling contrition. The young orator rose, and affirmed that Wedderburne had imputed to him words which his accuser well knew he had never spoken. The Speaker called Fox to order. The doors were locked, and the two heated adversaries prevented from leaving the House. Several Members endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation; but Constantine Phipps, the naval officer who had mistaken his vocation, only made matters worse; and Lord North was but a little more successful. Burke then interfered. Expressing a sincere regard for both the gentlemen, and wishing not only to prevent any unpleasant consequences, but to efface anything unpleasant from their minds, he said finely, that Wedderburne had spoken

from the most justifiable of all motives, that of protecting the memory of a departed friend. It was the dearest object in every heart, the only treasure left to those who survived. Yet he ought also to consider that the imputation of having spoken disrespectfully of the dead was peculiarly painful: the intemperance had therefore sprung from a worthy cause; and in such circumstances heat on both sides might naturally be excused. Though there was much more coquetry before harmony could be restored, Burke's speech had in some measure the effect desired. There was but one opinion on the judicious, dignified, and impressive manner in which he had performed a peacemaker's duty. Even Rigby for once in his life praised the sentiments which had fallen from the lips of the eloquent mediator.*

The same healing spirit was displayed by Burke in the next great debate. A few days before, Junius's Letter to Lord Mansfield had been published. This blow was now followed by a Parliamentary motion for inquiry into the administration of justice, which meant, as interpreted by Alderman Oliver and Sawbridge, a vote of censure on the Chief Justice. At such a time Burke's conduct is peculiarly worthy of observation. He had taken so much interest in the matter, that at some personal inconvenience, as he informed the House, he had been present in the Court of King's Bench on the 13th of June, when Lord Mansfield in his charge laid down the doctrine that the jury were not to decide on the criminality of the intention in cases of libel, but only to determine on the fact of publication. Censuring the indiscreet zeal of Oliver and Sawbridge, and mentioning Lord Mansfield in every term of respect, Burke argued that the matter indeed

* Cavendish, vol. ii. pp. 118, 119.

demanded inquiry ; but he was far from agreeing with those who maintained that the Chief Justice had introduced a novel and arbitrary construction of the law. He thought it undeniable that Holt, the firstborn judge of the Revolution, and Chief Justice Raymond more subsequently, with many other legal authorities, had held the same opinions on this subject as Lord Mansfield, whom the popular aldermen in the House of Commons, Camden and Chatham in the House of Lords, and Junius in the columns of the Public Advertiser, were so vehemently arraigning. That very letter of Junius to the Chief Justice, which absurdly enough some writers have more particularly selected to prove that Burke was Junius, he on this occasion strongly condemned, declaring it monstrous, shameful, indecent ; and the author of it deserving of the most rigorous punishment.* It is however a curious fact, showing how one-sided were the reports then given by William Woodfall of this and other debates, that, on comparing the speech as it has long been printed with the notes of Sir Henry Cavendish, all this strong censure of Junius will in the older report be found carefully suppressed.†

This, indeed, was one of the great evils of the jealous vigilance with which the House of Commons regarded the publication of speeches. It was not that no reports were published ; but that most incorrect and unfair reports were given, all of course leaning to the popular side, and contributing to encourage vulgar delusion. Fortunately the nature of the abuse indicated the remedy ; and a scene of much folly and violence which followed this debate, had an indirect but very power-

* Cavendish, vol. ii. pp. 137, 138.

† Burke's Collected Speeches, vol. i. pp. 67-72.

ful influence in hastening the great contests between the House of Commons and the press, that could not, under any circumstances, have been much longer deferred.

The motion for inquiry was of course defeated. But an eminent Judge could scarcely remain silent under the heavy imputations which in the House of Commons had been publicly cast upon him, and by which his conduct in the seat of judgment had been called in question, not only by popular writers and factious politicians, but also by lawyers of high character and distinguished ability. This Lord Mansfield appears to have felt. It therefore excited no surprise, though much interest, when it became known that the day after this debate he had given notice for a call of the House of Lords, and indicated his intention of bringing before them a subject of much importance. During the three days that elapsed before the appointed time, the constitutional timidity of the Chief Justice prevailed. On the 10th of December, a curious House assembled, and the Commons, full of expectation, crowded round and behind the throne ; but Lord Mansfield only stated that he had left with the clerk a paper containing the opinion of the Court of King's Bench on Woodfall's trial, and that of this document any noble Lord who pleased might take a copy. This was a tame conclusion to a business of so much promise ; but it was characteristic of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield.

As it happened, the day did not pass away without some of the excitement of the audience being gratified. Since Lord Mansfield had disappointed them in one scene, some of the Lords appeared anxious to create another. They succeeded to admiration. Their Lordships began to discuss the defences of the country ; the

Commons who were present listened respectfully ; but a shout of “Clear the House !” was raised ; and in a moment the whole assembly was in an uproar. In vain Lord Chatham and the Duke of Richmond interposed ; the order was imperative ; and the indignant Commons, not without some demonstrations of violence on the part of the officers of the Lords, were turned out. Deputy Black Rod, diminutive in person, but gigantic in authority, took Burke by the arm, and showed him the door.* Four gentlemen who had just brought in a Bill to the bar, were, in spite of their remonstrances, as summarily dismissed as they who were not messengers. Other Members felt themselves forcibly pushed out by the shoulders, and went down to their own House, fuming with rage.

The Parliamentary dignity of the Onslows was particularly outraged. Though George Onslow had not himself been one of the outcasts from the Upper House, thinking of course that he was conferring a great honour, he took up the cause of the Commons. Never before, perhaps, did he feel what a glory it was to be the descendant of Speakers ; and he acted, in truth, with the wisdom characteristic of people whose merit is only derivative. The Lords who had objected to the motion which had cleared the Upper House, had left the rest of the Peers in disdain, and were entering the House of Commons. With singular felicity, therefore, George Onslow moved that it should be cleared of strangers, “Lords and all.” “No, no,” said Burke, “don’t clear the House.”† But the words had been spoken. Many Members saw with regret the friendly Peers expelled,

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 165.

† Parliamentary History, vol. xvi. p. 1323.

and among them they could not but discern the blue ribbon and delicate features of the Marquis of Rockingham.

Then followed a desultory but most animated debate. Each Member gave his own version of the indignity the collective body had endured; and in such a temper were the Commons, that those who did not feel, thought it necessary at least to feign indignation. Lord North, affecting as much wrath as was becoming in a leader of the House, thought that a motion which had been made to inspect the journals of the Lords was absurd; and though the fury of the Members was unabated, and there was much noise and disorder prevailing, he soon forgot all the sorrows of the poor Commons, and sunk into a gentle slumber. In a subsequent speech Burke alluded to Lord North's somnolency, and the clamour and riot which had then been predominant. He even ventured to hint that there might have been a little private malice on the part of Mr. George Onslow in making the motion which retaliated upon the Peers; for he either must have known that Lord Rockingham was in the House, or else that sagacity which distinguished Speaker Onslow when in the chair, and which caused him to single out a Peer among twenty Commoners, was lost to the family. Burke also expressed his fear that this might be part of a plan not only to make the two Houses strangers to each other, but the public strangers to both. There was evidently indeed throughout this virtuous display of wrath, a lurking satisfaction in the minds of the vehement supporters of privilege, that the doors were shut as completely against the people as against the Lords; and if the Peers could have been admitted without the admission of those

who belonged to neither of the two Houses, it is more than probable that a good understanding between these branches of the Legislature would soon have been restored. The public was made the scapegoat of all these Parliamentary sins. Before the division that evening, Lord George Cavendish invoked the ghost of old Speaker Onslow, and hoped that the son would show due filial deference to his father's shade. The son assured him that this duty he would earnestly perform, and requested the House on this occasion to permit him to be one of the tellers, that his name might appear on the journals in future ages.*

The next day an honourable gentleman presented himself at the door of the House of Lords, but found it shut. "I am a Member of the House of Commons," said he, "and my name is Whitworth." "Sir," said one of the officials, "we have particular orders." They were produced. "Do you understand them to extend to Members of the House of Commons?" "Undoubtedly," was the very emphatic and decisive reply.

As the Lords gave no sign of yielding, it was moved that there should be a conference between the two Houses. There was another long debate. Members seemed never to tire of recapitulating their grievances. Burke, speaking last but one, recounted what he had himself experienced on that eventful evening of December, and took the opportunity of paying a compliment to Chatham. He had gone, he said, to the House of Lords in the pursuit of knowledge. He wished to behold the two great luminaries of the law, the blaze of whose splendid talents threw a light everywhere but into the House of Commons. He wished

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 156.

to hear the opinion of that great person who had been called to power in a day of national humiliation, and had undertaken to raise the country from its prostration; whose political attainments were then universally admitted; and who, still in the possession of health, spirits, and vigour, seemed to have the capacity of informing and instructing people in all things. The friends of the great Earl were delighted with this panegyric. Calcraft wrote to Chatham about the just and handsome manner in which Mr. Burke had paid the tribute of admiration; and it was not less graciously or unsuspiciously received from being, as the orator doubtless intended it, a little ironical.*

Though the motion for a conference was rejected by a large majority, on the following day there were no indications of putting up with the affront. Burke and some other Members took a Bill to the House of Lords; but they refrained from making the three customary obeisances; and as soon as they had handed the Bill to Lord Mansfield, they turned round, and walked out of the House without ceremony. Yet legislators in the sulks are not very dignified beings. The Lords were unjustifiable; but the Commons were becoming ridiculous. A motion made on the same evening by Lord George Germain, for the Speaker to write to all the eldest sons of Peers that were Members of the House of Commons, and request them to attend every day in their places, in order that they might assist in carrying Bills up to the Lords, appeared, even to many angry Members, so ludicrous that the laughter it occasioned brought back the Commons to their good-humour. But the Lords persevered in their folly; and such tenacity in

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 166. Chatham Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 58.

error goes far to justify the assertion of the Peers who signed a protest against the expulsion of the Commons, that the proceeding was premeditated by the enemies of the people, to hide from public scrutiny the neglect and incapacity of those who were entrusted with the national honour.*

There was however a timely show of vigour. The House of Commons voted supplies with great readiness : preparations for war went on with much apparent industry ; and the only reproach which the Opposition made was, that the Ministry was not in earnest. On this ground Burke opposed the summary increase of the land-tax to four shillings in the pound, as he had formerly opposed its summary diminution to three.

At Christmas little hope of peace remained. But on the 22nd of January, 1771, the day when Parliament met after the holidays, a declaration was signed by the Spanish Ambassador, in which his Catholic Majesty, while reserving the question of prior right of possession, regretted the expedition to the Falkland Islands, and undertook to restore Port Egmont to the British flag. This declaration being accepted, the cloud of war was dispelled.

The Opposition was greatly discontented. When Lord North communicated the agreement to which the two Courts had arrived, Burke moved for a call of the House on the 5th of February. But before that day, greater debates could not have taken place had there really been a long war, the highest interests depending, or a treaty of peace negotiated. In every discussion his abilities were as conspicuous as the noise and im-

* Protest signed by the Earl of Chatham, the Marquis of Rockingham, and their supporters in the Upper House. Parl. Hist. vol. xvi. p. 1319.

patience of the Ministerial majority who attempted to drown his voice and to hinder him from speaking at all. Thinking, as he did, that the convention which had just been concluded was dishonourable, he was neither then, nor at any other time, to be intimidated from doing what he believed to be his duty. Yet speaking so frequently the last in the debate, when many Members, heated with wine, had just returned from dinner, caring nothing for the arguments of the Opposition, and only waiting for the division, it is no wonder that an orator who was so earnest on all political questions, and, when he spoke, treated them with the elaborate fulness of a great philosopher rather than of a mere debater, appeared sometimes to exhaust the patience of men to whom politics were not a study and a science, but an agreeable excitement, or a lucrative trade. In these debates he laid down maxims of international law, similar to those which he illustrated with such brilliant eloquence in the last and most impassioned of his writings in his old-age; but on those questions, Members of Parliament were more hopelessly ignorant then than they are now, and they neither understood Burke's principles nor their application. "Noise," and "much noise," are the comments of the honourable reporter following many of these splendid sentences, which he admired so much that he candidly regretted the imperfection of his records. Eloquence did not change votes: reason did not convince: the flashes of wit were dazzling; but the attractions of a vulgar Court had more charms than the seductions of the most mighty of intellects, and the most imperial of imaginations.

All the motions for papers made by the Opposition were rejected by great majorities. Notwithstanding a

fine speech delivered by Burke, under many disadvantages, at midnight, on the 13th of February, an address of thanks was voted to His Majesty for the convention ; and the Falkland Islands soon ceased to be a subject of political controversy in Parliament.* The satisfaction for the national outrage England had received, was indeed, as Burke said, as barren as the rocks from which the English flag had been ignominiously pulled down ; but we may be thankful that questions deeply affecting the political freedom and social habits of Englishmen, questions which deeply concerned the nineteenth century, and the whole future of England and of mankind, were permitted to monopolize the attention of one whose powers did not deserve to be wasted in discussions on some desolate islands in the South Seas.

Much more important consequences than appeared to ordinary eyes were involved in the violation of the rights of electors, and the limitation of the power of juries. It is instructive to see how one of these questions begot the other, and how another, greater than either, sprang from both. The expulsion of Wilkes, the arbitrary choice of Colonel Luttrell, the judgment in the case of Woodfall, and the persecution of the printers for publishing the debates, were successive links in one chain. Before the session terminated, Burke broke the last of them ; and as the shackle of tyranny, covered with the rust of privilege, fell to the ground, public opinion burst forth enfranchised, defiant, and omnipotent.

Sir George Savile, on the 7th of February, brought in a Bill to secure the right of electors. It boldly struck at the three principles by which Wilkes had been expelled, and Luttrell seated in the House of Commons. These

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 299.

assumed principles were, that the House of Commons could by its single power make a law ; that one resolution of the House was such a law ; and that incapacity was the consequence of expulsion. In a portion of a speech which has been published in his works, but of which there is no trace in Cavendish, Burke combats, with great strength of argument, these propositions so fatal to the delegated authority of a House of Commons, and to all popular representation. He laid down three counter-principles, which all men who were not blind bigots of form, or determined enemies of the constitution, would find it impossible to dispute. That the House of Commons by itself had no legislative power ; that the power of occasional incapacitation, on discretionary grounds, was legislative and not judicial ; and that consequently the House of Commons singly had no power of incapacitation, were to him cardinal points, landmarks of the constitution, which he as victoriously established by logic, as they were founded on justice.*

It was not of course to be expected that the House of Commons would contradict its former conduct. Burke was not surprised that Sir George Savile's motion was defeated ; but he knew that there were circumstances when an Opposition which really did its duty should not rest satisfied with merely objecting to Ministerial measures. It must show sometimes that it also had a policy. For this purpose, before Christmas, Dowdeswell had given notice of a Bill to determine the question between the judges and juries concerning libels. A remedy was to be applied ; but Chatham and Lord Rockingham differed very decidedly on the form which it ought to

* Works and Correspondence, vol. vi. p. 112. Collected Speeches, vol. i. p. 73.

assume. Chatham only thought of the question as a means of personally annoying Lord Mansfield, and of acquiring popularity for himself and his individual followers. He therefore wished that the Bill should be declaratory in form, and that Dowdeswell should transfer the measure into the hands of Lord Camden. This proposal Burke strongly opposed, and earnestly encouraged Dowdeswell to proceed in his own manner with an enacting bill, rather than a declaratory one, which would be nothing more nor less than a measure censuring Lord Mansfield and all the Judges in Westminster Hall.*

On the 7th of March this public-spirited country gentleman brought forward his motion for the introduction of the Bill. The Ministers said nothing, and listened to the openly-expressed dissension among the Opposition. All the Members whom Chatham could influence either opposed the measure as unnecessary, or as erroneously worded, or gave it that lukewarm support which is ever more fatal than decided hostility. Even Calcraft roused himself from his habitual silence on the back benches where he so long sat as the brooding genius of intrigue, and delivered an opinion that the Bill should have been made declaratory. Barré and Dunning raised the same objection.

The Rockingham party stood alone. The Marquis himself was not in town, and his followers being deprived of the gentle but effective control which his mere presence always exercised over them, were in the greatest confusion. But Burke was more than a match for all adversaries, and, replying on behalf of his friends, made a most luminous and splendid oration. The outline

* Letter to Dowdeswell.

of this great speech is published in his works ; but on comparing that sketch with the report in Cavendish, it will be seen that even when he had written out a speech beforehand he was far from adhering servilely, like some professed orators, to the written memorandum, sentence after sentence, and word for word ; but that he followed the natural order of the debate, and with much versatility and readiness adapted his matured thoughts to circumstances as they arose in the course of the discussion. Still it was not in human wisdom and the power of genius to persuade persons of so many discordant interests and conflicting passions in the House of Commons to accept the Libel Bill of the Rockingham party as a compromise. Chatham, and many of the popular leaders, saw the defeat with joy ; and some of them were not ashamed to misrepresent, in the Public Advertiser, the spirit of the measure, and the facts of the debate. The Bill was mentioned as giving new powers to juries, instead of really confirming their rights ; and Burke was alluded to as defending Lord Mansfield, instead of merely arguing that the Chief Justice had erred in respectable company. As this unfair account of the measure and the discussion, propagated with so much industry by the enemies of Lord Rockingham's party, might really injure them in the estimation of the public, Burke seems for once to have aroused himself from his habitual indifference to what the newspapers said of himself and his connection. He wrote on this occasion the explanation of the Bill, which also appears in his works, and which, though dignified in manner, conveys a very intelligible rebuke to those many friends of the people who were desirous of disgracing the moderate Whigs because they would not, while asserting public freedom,

become their trembling slaves.* That the Bill on this subject, which was ultimately passed by Fox in 1792, was made declaratory and not merely enacting, is no reproach to the judgment which induced Burke in 1771 to prefer the measure in the less decided form. What may have been good policy in 1792, was not so excellent twenty years before, immediately after the charge on Woodfall's trial, when a declaratory measure could not but have conveyed a personal reflection on Lord Mansfield and all the Judges of the King's Bench.

This temporary defeat of the Rockingham party was shortly followed by a permanent victory, which carried with it the means of a complete and final triumph over the whole course of policy the Court and Government had so long pursued.

The debates of the last year had been published in greater detail and with more correctness than at any former period. The exclusion of the public from both Houses of Parliament, as the consequence of the quarrel between the Lords and Commons, was felt to be a national inconvenience; and as the House of Commons relaxed in its application of the standing order, and the debates began to be again printed in the newspapers, a corresponding jealousy was aroused in the bosoms of the staunch champions of privilege. Of these, Colonel Onslow was the foremost; not so much because he cared whether the speeches of Members of Parliament were published or not, as because his meddling coxcombry had made him many enemies out-of-doors, who ridiculed him in the newspapers, and applied to him coarse epithets which were not so undeserved as they were offensive. He determined to take a revenge becoming a

* Works and Correspondence, vol. vi. p. 147.

sportsman and an Onslow, a good shot and an arrogant Member of Parliament. He would have the printers who had had the audacity to fill their columns with accounts of the debates, and to comment on the acts of particular Members, summoned to the bar, and reprimanded on their bended knees. He had already, two years before, as we have seen, accomplished a similar achievement in the case of poor Thornton, the milkman, and he did not doubt that now, as then, he would see his enemies crouching in the dust, and the dignity of a Member of Parliament in his own pompous little person triumphantly vindicated.

On the 5th of February Colonel Onslow moved that the resolutions against the publication of debates should be read. Two men, to the Colonel's astonishment, did not regard his motion as a matter of course. Charles Turner, Member for York, objected strongly to the proceeding, and declared that not only ought the debates, but also the names of Members who composed the divisions, to be published. Burke warmly supported Turner, and even said that the debates, according to ancient practice, ought to be recorded in the journals. It being however useless to divide against the motion, it passed unanimously; and the resolutions were ordered to be printed with the votes of the day.*

This occurred on the Tuesday. On the Friday following, the Colonel, eager to carry on the war he had begun, complained of two printers who had continued to misrepresent speeches and to reflect on Members in defiance of the resolutions which had only recently been again recorded. His great grievance was, that he had himself been called Little Cocking George. His motion,

* Compare Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 243, with p. 257 of the same volume.

that the two newspapers should be read, was carried ; and the two printers were ordered to attend at the House on the following Monday. Moderate men on the Opposition benches objected to these proceedings. Burke appealed to the prudence of the House, warning the majority not to proceed to extremities, declaring that the liberty of the press and the standing order, if rigidly enforced, could not exist together ; and earnestly entreating them to balance inconveniences, and not again come into collision with the people. Charles Turner, adhering to his expressed opinion, was one of the tellers for the minority, and regretted that Members should really have reasons for dreading public criticism. The battle was not yet over. Burke and Turner had taken the lead in resenting this tyranny of privilege ; and they were neither of them men to be daunted by the violence of an enraged majority.*

Charles Turner was one of the characters of the House. For the part he took in this great contest his memory deserves respectful mention by every friend of intellectual freedom. An unsophisticated country gentleman, of extensive landed property, eccentric in manner, almost coarse in language, a keen sportsman, and always dressed in a green shooting-coat with tally-ho buttons ; yet the bosom of this rude and untutored landowner glowed with as intense a love of liberty as ever warmed the heart and exalted the spirit of Algernon Sidney. Lord Rockingham had not a more attached friend, Burke a more respectful admirer, and the Court a more resolute opponent. It was rare in that age to find any man with such sympathies for the poor ; perhaps rarer in any age among the class to which Turner belonged. He sought

* Cavendish, vol. ii. pp. 257-260. Parl. Hist., vol. xvii. p. 58.

no applause. He cared for no honours. He obeyed the dictates of his noble nature, and he instinctively went right. The hatred of this rough country gentleman against whatever he believed to be an injustice puts to shame the actions of many philanthropists by profession. Though so inveterate a sportsman, he loudly condemned the monstrous iniquities of the Game Laws; because, as he once told the House, had he been born a poor man, with his passion for field sports, he must himself have been a poacher.* With the same instinctive love of justice which is a better guide than even the reason of the philosopher through the maze of political sophistry, Charles Turner stood forth with Burke in the front rank of those who, by their courage and perseverance, won for their countrymen the complete freedom of the press.

The day fixed for the attendance of the printers was changed to the 19th of February. They did not make their appearance. Another order for their attendance was made, which the passionate Colonel, impatient for their punishment, considered a great indulgence. It was however not obeyed with any more alacrity than the preceding mandate, and the printers were ordered for contempt into the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. But the servants and shopmen of the two offending individuals knew nothing of the authority of the Speaker or the dignity of Members of Parliament. Deputy Serjeant-at-

* Wraxall's Historical Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 26. The portrait of Charles Turner, by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, is one of the best in the pages of this partial but amusing writer. It is seldom that he does justice to any individual of the Rockingham party, from which he was politically separated, and with the most distinguished members of which he had evidently very little acquaintance, and still less sympathy; yet even he could not but depict Turner as one of the most generous of men.

Arms was laughed at, and was glad to make his way out of the house he had proudly entered, bringing neither of the printers to the bar. As though the whole affair was not ludicrous enough, the House then addressed the Crown to issue a royal proclamation against Wheble and Thomson, and to offer a reward for the capture of these two contumacious publishers of the debates.

Without waiting to see the result of this proclamation, shortly after the rejection of the Bill on libels, Colonel Onslow, bustling and important as usual, informed the House in sporting phrases befitting the occasion, that he would bring before them three more brace of printers, and promised for the future no lack of the same game. Burke and Turner, assisted by many other members of the minority, not approving of this kind of sport, resolved at last to make a stand. Thomas Townshend, the younger, first raised the flag of opposition, and, much to the indignation of the Colonel, declared himself against such foolish and ridiculous conduct. George Onslow rushed forward to defend his relation with all the heat of an Onslow at such a moment. The motion for the production of the first paper, the Morning Chronicle, was carried ; and nothing seemed easier to the Colonel than summarily to dispose of the other five. To Charles Turner belongs the honour of indicating the proper tactics for the Opposition to adopt, which ultimately turned the weapons of the supporters of form and privilege against themselves. "I would divide," said he, "upon every one of these papers."

The advice was followed. The second motion was carried ; but the Opposition were determined to stretch the forms of the House to the utmost, that the patience of Members might be wearied out, and the printers, whom

Colonel Onslow thought such fair game, escape. Every pretence was made for motions of adjournment; other propositions were resolutely brought forward; and each and all were pressed to a division. Never were Burke's wit and raillery used with more effect; and he succeeded thoroughly in raising the laugh against the majority, and encouraging the ardour of the Opposition. His kinsman William stood by him gallantly, and on this memorable night played no inglorious part. After several divisions, Burke addressed a few eloquent and animated words to the House. "I will not," he said, "under the general idea of carrying into execution a standing order, give my countenance to these proceedings.—You are walking in new and untrodden ways.—There is not an inch of this ground that has not been contested with the people.—Power, not exercised with wisdom, will be found to be terror, and will end in weakness." Again the House divided on a motion for adjournment; again it divided on a main question; again it divided on the next paper in the Colonel's list: the minority, diminished from fifty-six to twenty-two, with the hours fast waning and the House every hour getting thinner, still resolutely held out.

It was half-past ten o'clock, and they were but at the third printer. The Opposition scientifically made the struggle a matter of calculation. "At this rate," remarked Sawbridge stoutly, "it will require thirteen more hours to get through the six papers." George Onslow's despair became almost pathetic at this announcement. "As long as I have a single Member to second me," answered Sir William Meredith, "I will go on dividing the House." All the slavish adherents to form, Ellis, Dyson, Luttrell, who had distinguished them-

selves against the people in the Middlesex elections, with one voice denounced the conduct of the minority. But it was in vain. Motion followed motion; division followed division. Ludicrous questions were raised, but were not easily dismissed. Every opportunity was taken for debate. The Member who could protract the time the longest, was considered the most effective speaker. Even a printer's devil was regarded as an angel in human form because his name could be made the pretext for a discussion. The Speaker said he was tired. Barré gravely replied that he had furnished him with an argument for adjournment; another motion for adjournment was made; and of course there was another division.

The long night wore away; but still the minority were firm. The Speaker again confessed that he was sick, that he was weary, that he was tired, and that he knew neither how to help the House nor himself. Barré again wickedly rose, and hoped the Chair was not attempting to reproach either side of the House, nor to influence the debates. The Speaker only replied with another lamentation. Burke, commiserating his distress, agreed with him that his position was lamentable; but, like one of the comforters of the patient and afflicted dweller in the land of Uz, assured him that the stand must be made; that if they contented themselves with only giving a single negative, they might have printers at the bar by dozens; and that nothing should deter him from going on with the divisions. Decidedly the first gentleman in England made a somewhat poor figure on this memorable night which ushered into existence a new estate of the realm.

Two o'clock in the morning came. The gallant minority, now reduced to fifteen, were still facing a Minis-

terial majority of seventy-nine. Some of the Members went out to obtain a little refreshment, and in the next division there were only seven still patriotically watching over the illustrious nativity of the Fourth Estate. It became a point of honour to remain ; with strength recruited, the absent six or seven Members returned ; on the next division the minority again increased to thirteen. In the one immediately following they numbered twelve, and of this Burke and Turner were the tellers. The last reported words that morning were, as they deserved to be, from the lips of Charles Turner ; and as spoken amid the throes of a great moral revolution to which he had so powerfully contributed, they deserve to vibrate in the ears of future generations : “ If I can but get two gentlemen to divide with me,” said this eccentric but high-minded Member for York, “ I will sit here until twelve o’clock tomorrow. I always wished for small divisions. With fifteen gentlemen having the interests of the people at heart, I will laugh at any majority.” There were eight other divisions before all the printers could be ordered to attend ; and when the House adjourned, at four o’clock in the morning, the great victory was virtually won. The House had divided three-and-twenty times. The experiment of ordering a number of printers to the bar as a matter of course, for publishing the debates and diffusing among the multitude political information, was not likely to be repeated. The sportsman had overshot the mark. The Fourth Estate was born.

Important business relating to the East India Company had to be discussed on the 13th of March. But Members who had been in the House until five o’clock that morning were not likely to be ready to take their seats again at two or three o’clock in the afternoon.

The question was postponed, and on the next day the six printers had been ordered to appear.

As soon as the House met, Colonel Onslow joyfully informed the Commons that four of the printers had obeyed the summons. It seemed not difficult to George Onslow and his cousin the Colonel, whose zeal had outrun his discretion, to give them a gentle reprimand. But they found that this was not so easy to be effected. "I consider this an injustice," said Turner, again taking the lead in resistance, "and I shall divide as before, and oppose all such proceedings." A desultory discussion ensued. Lord North and the courtiers inveighed against the conduct of the minority who had audaciously put a stop to the business of the nation; and the Prime Minister hinted most injudiciously, that if the forms of the House continued to be abused by a small minority, means might be devised by the majority for surmounting all such obstacles. But the minority were not to be daunted by this menace of the Minister, and they called upon the noble Lord at the head of the Government to explain his words. Stephen Fox, the elder brother of Charles, volunteered his services to put an end to the conduct of the minority; though Charles himself, with characteristic candour and boldness, admitted, that, although he strongly disapproved of what the Opposition had done, had he thought as they did, he would have acted in the same manner. But the most memorable sentences in this debate, and some of the most memorable that were ever uttered in Parliament, came from Burke. Rising to the loftiest height of that sublime elevation from which he was accustomed to regard political affairs, and looking forward into coming centuries with a prophet's vision, after exulting in the

endeavours that had been made, and recapitulating the circumstances in which they had arisen, he added : “ POSTERITY WILL BLESS THE PERTINACITY OF THAT DAY.”*

After the delivery of this bold prophecy, he announced that whenever such rash actions should be again attempted under the colour of standing orders, he would act in the same manner. At such a declaration, and with the debate assuming the dangerous aspect of the former discussion, Sir Fletcher Norton, not the most efficient of Speakers, lost all dignity, and entreated the House to choose some one else to occupy the Chair; for, if the debate was again to be protracted until six or seven o'clock in the morning, he said it would be quite out of his power to sit so long. The last men to do homage to prophetic powers amid the disenchanting realities of every-day existence, are the morally imbecile ; and Conway with bland malignity selected this moment to make the rudest and most insulting of all his attacks on Burke, whom, with no unnecessary circumlocution, he accused of turning the House into a bear-garden. “ If such advice be followed,” said this gentle Philistine, “ I should as soon expect to see a question fairly decided in Hockley-in-the-Hole as in St. Stephen’s Chapel.” Loud cheering from the majority followed.

Burke fired up. But as he was attempting to repel without any unbecoming acrimony this unjustifiable attack, another gallant warrior of the Court called him to order. Then came Mr. George Onslow, boasting of his Parliamentary genealogy, and reflecting even more directly than Conway on the great man who had just assisted in conferring so inestimable a boon upon his

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 395.

country. "Descended from Parliamentary men," asserted this unworthy scion of so many Speakers, "we must have had no hearts if we had suffered the standing orders to be set at defiance." Burke desired to offer a few words to the House, "if," he said, "it be still an elective and not an hereditary body. I am not," he proudly added, "descended from Members of Parliament. I am not descended from any eminent person whatever. My father left me nothing in the world but good principles, good instruction, and good example, from which I have not departed. The gallant General says he has a character to keep. My circumstances will bear witness to my character. As I have resisted, so will I continue to resist, these attacks both from the hereditary line of Tories and the hereditary line of Whigs." On making two or three more observations about the manner in which he had been tied to the stake, and baited first by one person and then by another, he saw Lord North getting up from his seat. "The noble Lord," ejaculated Burke, "is about to call me to order. I have no doubt that before he sits down he will say something disorderly."*

The Minister said that Burke might explain, but not reply. "He rose," answered Dowdeswell, "to assert a right which every man has, to protect his character." Some Members excused Conway, others supported Burke. Young Charles Fox, although his politics were then directly opposite to Burke's, at last nobly came forward, and candidly admitted that Conway's language had given him much pain, because it conveyed an imputation on his honourable friend; "as respectable a Member," added Fox, "as any in this House." This is the most pleasant

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 396.

incident which Fox's career yet afforded for contemplation; and his interference compelled Conway to disclaim fully any intention of making a personal reflection.

The altercation was at length at an end; but the business of the night was not yet over. The Opposition had moved that the order of the day should be postponed, for other business to be proceeded with; and again it was not until five o'clock the next morning, and after many more divisions, that Colonel Onslow had the pleasure of seeing four of the printers at the feet of the Speaker.*

It was however with the other two that there was the greatest difficulty. Wilkes, as one of the Aldermen of the City, was like a fierce bird of prey watching the conflict from afar, and scenting the carrion in the wind. He had prepared a trap into which the majority at once fell. Miller, one of the two printers who had not obeyed the last order of the House, was apprehended by the messenger; but the prisoner immediately sent for a constable, and had himself taken before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, who were then sitting at the Guildhall. They released the printer, denied the legality of the Speaker's warrant, and committed the messenger for an assault. The Sergeant-at-Arms at last gave bail for the official's appearance. The Lord Mayor and Alderman Oliver, both being Members of the House, were ordered to attend in their places; it was voted that the release of Miller was a breach of privilege; the record of the messenger's recognizances was arbitrarily expunged from the minute-book of the Mayor's Court; Oliver was speedily committed to the Tower; and the Mayor afterwards sent to share the same imprisonment,

* Cavendish, vol. ii. p. 400.

which continued until Parliament was prorogued on the eighth of May.

But Wilkes, the other sitting Alderman, escaped with impunity. He had refused to appear unless his right to take his seat as Member for Middlesex were acknowledged; and the House betrayed its fear by adjourning over the day on which they had commanded his attendance: There were long debates; there were several secessions of the Opposition; there was much agitation. But after all, the night when the small minority effectually accomplished the liberation of the Press, has much more interest and value to all who would estimate the due importance of events, than the intemperate proceedings of the Mayor and Aldermen on one side, or of the majority of the House on the other; neither of which met with Burke's perfect approbation.

The great fact was that even Colonel Onslow durst not venture to summon another covey of printers to the bar. The freedom of the Press, as the daily chronicle of public events, including the publication of the debates in Parliament, had been indirectly but effectually asserted. The Fourth Estate would soon give unmistakable indications of a vigorous infancy, to be succeeded by a daring and impetuous youth, which would itself be followed by an all-embracing, all-defying manhood, that cannot expire or be enfeebled, except amid the last ashes of that constitutional liberty whose flame, with a vestal devotion through many sad years, it was to guard and keep alive for England and for the civilized world.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1771-1772.

A RECESS.

THE Press was free. As the session of 1771 closed, this triumph, which the prescient philosopher only could appreciate, might seem of small significance to the popular partisan ; for throughout the spring the majorities of the Government had steadily increased, and, at the prorogation, Lord North's Ministry was firmly established in power. After Grenville's death, Lord Suffolk, a young and pompous nobleman of no great abilities, had been considered the leader of that party for want of a better ; but in January he accepted the Privy Seal, and most of his followers appeared on the ministerial benches. The Opposition was in evil case. With dissension in the City between Wilkes and Oliver, with dissension in Parliament between Chatham and Rockingham, nothing remained to Burke and those who thought with him but to adhere steadfastly to their principles, whithersoever they might lead.

Had he, indeed, been of the same constitution as a Wedderburne, he would have made good terms for himself, and have deserted a cause which appeared hopeless. Contemporary authority of this same year affirms that both Lord North and the King were fully sensible of the value of such an acquisition ; that they would have

given any price for his adherence ; that many indirect, but very tempting offers were made, and that they were all unhesitatingly resisted.* Burke himself a little later confirms this statement. In the presence of those who could well have convicted him of falsehood had he not spoken the truth, he called Heaven to witness that he had ever resisted all the temptations which Courts and Governments held out.† His virtue was indeed to be put to a more lengthened trial than he at the time could have imagined. Parties had assumed the relative position which they were to retain for eleven long and disastrous years. Throughout that extended period Burke's circumstances were to remain unchanged. The story of these eleven years cannot be more pleasing from seeing how nobly, but how ineffectually, one great man endeavoured to save his country from unutterable disgrace.

Though his hopes of office might be indeed extinguished, his kindness to Barry and those who were in any way dependent upon him, was in no respect diminished. On one occasion William Burke was obliged to confess that money was not so plentiful as it had lately been, and to request Barry not to make his drafts payable after so many days' date, but after so many days' sight, that they might have time to look about them, in order to procure the means of liquidation ; but every bill which the young painter had drawn upon the Burkes for his support was paid, and he was told that they

* Anecdotes of Junius, prefixed to Junius's Letters, edit. 1771.

† "I obtest heaven and earth, that in all places, and at all times, I have hitherto shoved by the gilded hand of corruption, and endeavoured to stem the torrent which threatens to overwhelm this land ; and from such temptations I pray God, of his infinite mercy, ever to preserve me ! Sir, I hope the House is not offended; I only repeat the Lord's Prayer."—Collected Speeches, vol. i. p. 150.

would endure anything rather than permit him to want in a foreign land.* By their advice he spent some time at Bologna, and then, his studies being completed, and his father believed to be in a dying state, he returned to England.

His deficiency in some of the mechanical parts of his art had not been completely removed. His studies had been pursued in a somewhat desultory manner, and had varied with the varying inclinations of his impetuous and ill-regulated mind. In his youth he had been an enthusiast in Protestantism, and in his old-age he was characteristically a bigot to the same creed ; but on the Continent he had adopted the prevailing irreligious temper, and on coming home made no secret of his opinions. The same generosity which had induced Burke to send him abroad for improvement in his art, directed him to perform towards the friendless youth in another manner the duties of a parent. He assailed his sceptical tendencies in every form ; recommended to him a course of studies which might bring him back to a better way of thinking ; and, in particular, put into his hands Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. This masterly work produced on Barry that beneficial effect which it has done in so many other similar cases.† The impulsive artist became again a sincere believer ; and in gratitude for the powerful influence which the *Analogy* had in reviving his faith, introduced the revered author into his group of saints in the picture of Elysium.

About the same time, when Burke was combating Barry's infidelity, he was informed of the death of one to whom he owed and had acknowledged the weightiest

* Barry's *Life and Works*, vol. i. p. 196.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 6.

obligations as a preceptor, a friend, and an example of the highest devotion.

On the 24th of June Abraham Shackleton died. He had long ago resigned his school to his only son Richard, and then, as Richard afterwards did, made it his business to superintend the interests of the Society of Friends. He had punctually attended their meetings at Dublin, and had occasionally been at the great annual assembly in London. During his last visit to England, Burke had the pleasure of seeing his old master at Beaconsfield, of showing him his house and grounds, and of introducing him to his son, who was then nearly of the same age as his father had been when he was placed under the Quaker's care. But Abraham had been seized with illness on his journey homewards, and from this attack he never fully recovered. His health gradually sunk; and with all his friends and grandchildren about his bed, and his mind composed and serene, he died, in the elevated faith of a real Christian.* Burke was much affected when Richard Shackleton informed him of the good old man's departure.

In Burke's private life, as may be gathered from his reply to this letter of his friend, and from his correspondence with the Nagles, there was but little alteration. His son had had, during the last year, a tutor at home, and had made a very respectable progress in the Greek and Latin classics. After the Christmas holidays he had been sent to Westminster School. William Burke was as usual with his friend and relative; and Richard, the elder, had, after an absence of nearly two years from England, received permission to return home, and was expected in the autumn. A young naval officer, who

* Mrs. Leadbeater's Memoirs of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton.

afterwards became an admiral, had been sent to sea by Burke, and was zealously assisted by the family. He was the son of one of Burke's cousins, who had died young, and for whom he had entertained much affection. This friendship for the father caused him to do all that was in his power for the orphan child, and to use every means to advance him in his profession. The boy deserved his care. At this time he was one of the briskest and most active lads on the quarter-deck, and when on shore, by Burke's advice, pursued a course of study which might be recommended to every young midshipman. His first maritime experience had been in the Company's service; he had then been transferred to the Royal Navy; and having won the regard of all under whom he served, was becoming a general favourite and an efficient sailor. His holidays were spent at Beaconsfield; but his kind friends of that household knew how to direct his youthful energies, and they permitted him to spend but little of his time in idleness.

Other branches of the Nagle family met with the same kindness, though they did not meet with the same success in life. The most unfortunate of Burke's cousins was James Nagle. This poor man, with a wife and family, no certain means of support, and an epileptic distemper, which prevented him from earning his bread, was looked at askance by his elder brother, Garret, against whose anger Burke had been compelled to remonstrate. "His relation to us," Burke wrote, "neither confers upon you nor me any right whatsoever to add to his affliction and punishment; but rather calls upon us to do him all the little good offices in our power to alleviate his misfortunes."* Though to assist James per-

* Letter to Garret Nagle in New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 454.

manently was hopeless, Burke's generosity to him was not easily exhausted. Every now and then poor James appears on the scene in a miserable plight, and cannot be established in a satisfactory condition. Another humble cousin, who was only a handicraftsman, but a steady and industrious fellow, Burke was enabled, in the course of the following year, through Sir George Colebrooke, to send out as supercargo to the East Indies.*

The prosperous Garret himself, the industrious gentleman and model agriculturist, also during this year requested his cousin's good offices. The agent who managed Lord Shelburne's estates in Kerry had recently died, and Garret Nagle, living part of the year in the same neighbourhood, had entertained the hope of obtaining the appointment. He wrote to Burke on the subject, who mentioned the matter to Colonel Barré as Lord Shelburne's confidential friend and political ally. Barré said that he never interfered in his patron's private affairs; but that on this occasion he would do his best, and, if there were any prospect of success, would let Burke know.†

Experimental agriculture formed the staple of Burke's communications with Garret Nagle. It was the ruling passion of his cousin; it was one of his own chosen

* Letter to Garret Nagle in New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 529.

† "Now I will say a word or two on your own business, concerning the agency you mentioned. Lord Shelburne has been for many years very polite to me, and that is all. I have no interest with him whatsoever; for which reason, when I received your letter, I thought it best to speak to Barré, who is in close connection with him. He told me that he seldom or never interfered in Lord Shelburne's private affairs, and believed that, if he should on this occasion, it would have no effect; but he said he would try, and that if there was any prospect of success, he would let me know it. He has said nothing to me since."—Burke to Garret Nagle, May 6, 1771.

means of relaxation ; and at this period in particular, as the barometer of his official hopes sunk down to so low a degree, he seems only during the recess to have thrown the energies of his mind more completely than ever into the cultivation of his farm.

The winter had been a hard one. Although Gregories was some twenty-six miles from London, provisions were so dear in the metropolis, that Burke had found it good economy to have all articles of consumption brought from his own farm. As his carts toiled through the snow, laden with vegetable produce for Covent Garden Market, they also carried a good supply of mutton, bacon, eggs, butter, and poultry for the squire's own domestic consumption in Westminster. Everything on the farm had suffered through the season. The frosts had been severe ; the spring had been very late ; and Burke found, on leaving the political cares of London behind him for a time, and returning for the summer to Beaconsfield, that his turnips had rotted ; that his sheep, from the loss of their food during the winter, were in a poor condition ; that his grass was very backward ; and that much of his ground for barley remained unsown. He predicted that he would have a very bad crop of hay ; and his prediction was fulfilled. When the summer did come, and his grass was cut down, he found that while in the last year he had had a hundred and ten loads, he had this year only forty-four. His cultivation of carrots had however fully succeeded. Though he discovered that, from some cause or other which neither he nor his friend the eminent scientific agriculturist of the time, Arthur Young, could explain, they would not fatten hogs, they were excellent for feeding cattle, and had brought him fourteen pounds besides from Covent Garden

Market; and he was convinced that had he understood that market as well some months ago as he did then, he might have made thirty. He was also very busy in the turnip husbandry, and was anxious that Garret Nagle should adopt it in Ireland. Turnips indeed had failed at Gregories this year, as other vegetables; but Burke was not disengaged; and one wet autumn day, when he was obliged to suspend the cutting of his wheat, he sat down to his desk and wrote a long letter on the subject, entering into all the reasons for and against their cultivation. From the earnestness with which he writes; the minuteness with which he details his experiments; the care with which he balances the expense of ploughing, harrowing, dunging, and hoeing, with the advantages attending the increase of the stock of cattle, the fattening of sheep, and the improvement of the ground for the production of wheat, oats, or barley, according to the time when the turnips should be taken away; it might be believed that his calling was that of a professional agriculturist, and that his whole life was devoted to the tillage of the soil. No person unacquainted with his other occupations could suppose that this employment was but a mere diversion from still more energetic pursuits; that instead of his days being spent in the fields, they were spent in the House of Commons; and that, just before returning to the country for the summer, the dawn of more than one winter's day had seen him still sitting at his post of duty as the guardian of constitutional freedom.*

As an agriculturist, he was no amateur. His lands were really cultivated to a good account, and his progress in farming was such as Arthur Young himself could not but applaud. This learned and sagacious man, who

* Letter to Garret Nagle, August 23, 1771.

was not so blindly devoted to his own science as not to observe, in the different tours he made in various countries, their political features as well as the condition of the soil, had even mentioned Burke honourably as an experimental agriculturist in one of his volumes published during this year. They corresponded, they visited each other's farms, and entertained sentiments of mutual respect. The generalizing powers of Burke's mind are as apparent in these letters on the feeding of hogs, the growth of cabbages, and the question of deep ploughing, as in his writings on political affairs. Like Shakespeare, he is ever finding analogies between the moral and the physical world, and deducing from them maxims of universal application. In discussing the reasons for deep ploughing, he settles, that the object the farmer has in view is, to divide the soil, in order to give facilities for the blade to strike upwards and the root to shoot out in all directions, and to render the soil pervious to all the heterogeneous contents of that universal menstruum, the air. But then he asks, Does it follow, that because the external influences of the rain, sun, and air are good in one degree, they are good in all? "It is a dangerous way of reasoning," he writes, "in physics as well as morals, to conclude, because a given proportion of anything is advantageous, that the double will be twice as good, or that it will be good at all: neither in the one case nor the other is it always true that two and two make four."*

While he was writing this letter, he was anxiously expecting his brother home from the West Indies. He was even delaying another visit to Arthur Young's farm, as well as a journey to the seat of the Townshends at

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 13.

Frognall, until Richard's arrival.* A few days afterwards his anxiety was set at rest, and his brother, in excellent health, set his feet once more on the English shore, and immediately hurried down to his friends at Beaconsfield. He had made a valuable purchase in the West Indies, and though its validity was disputed by the Government, Burke considered his brother's acquisition just; and believing that the objections of the colonial authorities would soon be removed, hoped that Richard had made his fortune.

The purchase was of landed property. It was not, however, as the editors of Burke's Correspondence state, in Grenada, but in the neighbouring island of St. Vincent. This was one of the West Indian possessions ceded by France to the British Crown by the last treaty of peace. It was inhabited by two distinct races of Caribs, and by many French emigrants, most of whom, when the island changed masters, disposed of their lands to English adventurers, and betook themselves to colonies still under French dominion. Commissioners were also sent out to sell other arable portions of the island that had not yet known proprietors; and no sooner had the English taken possession, than they began to look with a jealous eye on the lands still held by the black Caribs, who, though not the aboriginal inhabitants, had by their energy and ability become more powerful than their yellow brethren. The new settlers were constantly representing to their Government at home the profits which might be derived from the districts held by the barbarians; the dangers which impended from their faithlessness, cunning, and devotion to the French; and the excellence of that part of the island in which, hating

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 131.

the English, and not without reason distrusting their intentions, they hunted in the woods and fished in the streams which they regarded as their own. The Ministers in England long neglected the interested advice of avarice and ambition ; but at last the importunities of the colonists prevailed, and the Treasury sent out orders to effect an exchange of land with the Caribs, and to pay them for what they had really cleared. The unsophisticated savages very naturally objected to such an arrangement, and refused to be transplanted. A century before, the ancestors of most of the blacks had composed a cargo of negroes in an English slave-ship which had been wrecked on the coast ; and they suspected that the colonists were about to revive the claim of property which had been enforced over their forefathers, and from which they had been enfranchised by the more merciful elements. Nevertheless the work proceeded. Roads were pushed forward, and surveyors explored the country, until the Caribs assumed so hostile an attitude as to compel the commissioners reluctantly to pause. They wrote to England for further instructions, and the orders of the Treasury were somewhat modified. There was to be, early in 1771, a new partition, and the exchanges were to be effected in a smaller compass. But the Caribs objected to the whole spirit of the plan, and their scruples were not to be removed by any change in the details.*

It was at this time that Richard Burke, then in Grenada as one of the Commissioners of Excise, made his acquisition. The point of time is important, as showing that his purchase was not the result of the massacre and spoliation of the following year. It seems rather to have

* Annual Register, 1773, chap. vii. Parl. Hist., vol. xvii. p. 575.

been made with some regard to original rights, which the Colonial Government trampled on, and to have been obtained by direct purchase from the Caribs themselves; but the purchase was annulled by an Act of Provincial Assembly, and Richard Burke's title declared void.* Shortly after his return home, he obtained a report of the Board of Trade in his favour, and the business was expected to come before the Treasury.†

This November, Burke himself was rather fortunate in his relation with the Colonies. He was appointed Agent of the State of New York. The salary has been variously given. The Gentleman's Magazine at the time informed its readers that Mr. Edmund Burke was appointed Agent for the Province of New York, and that the place was worth a thousand a year; others have placed the annual income at six hundred pounds; Mr. Prior considered it worth nearly seven hundred; but an inspection of the Journals of the New York Assembly shows that five hundred a year was the rate at which Burke's services were to be remunerated by those who made the appointment.†

By some of his contemporaries it was spoken of directly as a bribe. Dull official men who were themselves

* New Monthly Magazine, vol. xiv. p. 529. Letter of Burke to Garret Nagle, July 12, 1772.

† "Since my brother came home he has not been negligent in the management of his contested purchase. How the matter may finally turn out, I know not. But hitherto he has gone on so successfully as to obtain a report of the Board of Trade, recommending to the Council the disallowance of the Act of Provincial Assembly, which had put him out of possession and declared his title void. Thus far he has succeeded. Of the quiet and unmolested possession I do not despair; but as it is an affair of magnitude, so it will be a work of time and patience."—Letter from Burke to Garret Nagle.

‡ See Bancroft's History of the United States, chap. xlv. Gentleman's Magazine, vol. xli. p. 473.

receiving thousands a year out of the public purse because they lent their consciences out to hire to carry into effect the policy of the Court, thought they had sufficiently answered Burke's unanswerable arguments against the folly of their conduct towards America, by alluding to him as the paid agent for New York. It is certain nevertheless, that his opinions on American taxation remained after he had accepted this situation just what they had been when he advocated the repeal of the Stamp Act, and supported the Declaratory Bill in the first speeches he ever made in Parliament. Then, as in all subsequent discussions up to this time, he had maintained that the power of the British Legislature over all the British Colonies was supreme; that the right of taxation could not be denied on principle; but that the exercise of such an authority was most imprudent in the circumstances with which the Court and Parliament had to deal. As agent for New York, and after he had ceased to be agent for New York, such continued to be his invariable sentiments, though they were in direct opposition to the extreme claims of the colonists; and they were never more distinctly or more positively expressed than in his two great orations on American affairs, which were not only spoken, but even published while he held this situation. As a testimony of the respect with which he was regarded in America, the choice was gratifying to his feelings; but had he been venal, he might long before have acquired much greater wealth than could possibly accrue to him from any provincial agency. That, to use one of his own illustrations, would have been building a Chalcedon, with the most magnificent and most inviting site of the universe full in view on the opposite shore.*

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 334.

He needed some such mark of public approbation. At the time of his appointment the hue and cry of the Court was raised against him ; old friends, frightened at the uproar, were falling away from his side ; and one continuous howl of calumny was reverberating throughout the kingdom. The Ministry, after having long suspected him, had now firmly fixed upon him as the author of Junius ; and all the writers in their pay were daily filling the newspapers with abuse of the man whom they thought so audacious and formidable. It was not however only in ministerial circles that the identity of Burke and Junius was, at the close of this year, taken for granted : wherever politics were discussed, this report found credence, and became a general conviction.

Several causes had contributed to this result. There was the opinion which, ever since Junius appeared, two years before, like a brilliant meteor in the political heavens, had more or less prevailed, even with the best judges, and which Dr. Johnson candidly confessed had had the most weight with him, that no person but Burke had displayed such abilities for political controversy as were exhibited in these celebrated letters. This belief gradually gathered strength, until at this time an unscrupulous bookseller published an unauthorized edition of these contributions, as far as they had yet been written, and appended to them a preface which professed to contain anecdotes of Junius, who was there clearly implied to be Burke. This preface, though abounding in errors, has some statements which are partly correct ; and as giving the gossip of the day concerning Burke's character, is extremely curious.

An interview between Burke and Sir William Draper was related with minute circumstantiality. It went the

round of the newspapers of the time, and certainly appears characteristic. "Sir," said the angry warrior, "I am informed that you wrote the letter which appeared in today's Public Advertiser, under the signature of Junius. I shall be obliged if you will tell me whether you did or not." "Really, Sir," answered Burke, "if you believe your informant, it is needless; and if you do not, it is rather rude to found your suspicion of me on the information of one you suspect to be a liar." "Sir," rejoined Sir William with indignation, and in his most martial tones and attitudes, "Lord Talbot challenged Mr. Wilkes on a similar occasion, and I think it is a question a gentleman has both a right to ask, and to which he has a right to expect an answer." Burke, with perfect temper, is said to have replied: "You, Sir, may adopt the conduct of Lord Talbot if you please; but I assure you I shall not make Mr. Wilkes the standard of mine."*

In the spirit of the bookseller's preface, a letter, dated the 15th of October, signed Zeno, and written in defence of Lord Mansfield, was printed in the Public Advertiser and addressed to Junius, *alias* Edmund, the Jesuit of St. Omer. As making the matter still worse, and evidently to mislead, Philo-Junius, in answering Zeno's communication, was far from denying the imputed authorship; but rather appeared to wish Burke to be taken for Junius, that the real individual might be more secure from discovery.†

This was the effect undoubtedly produced on the public mind. An opinion prevailed most injurious to

* *Anecdotes of Junius.* Preface to the Edition of 1771, p. 18. The initials, Lord T. and Mr. W., only are given in the preface, but of course the names may easily be supplied.

† Junius. Letter 61.

Burke. He was thought a dangerous and a desperate man ; his house was looked upon as a place for dark political machinations ; and his cousin and friend, like himself, considered of very doubtful repute. The Burkes, as they still continued collectively to be called, were believed by many timid but most respectable people, to be two or three ambitious and unprincipled men, who would hesitate at nothing to secure their advancement in a society to which their origin and position gave them no recognized right of entrance. It is an undoubted fact, that the suspicion of Burke being the author of Junius did, in these years, without increasing the opinion entertained of his powers as a writer, have a most pernicious effect, in engendering a distrust of his character for frankness and honesty. To this injurious impression may reasonably be attributed some of the rude attacks which, without general reprehension, were so frequently made upon him in the House of Commons. It was considered a rude but real justice, to assail with acrimony the man who was believed to be secretly penning malignant libels against people who could make no defence.

But Burke cared little for the opinions of the unthinking and ignorant multitude. If he suffered real vexation, it was from the candid friends who had known him long. One of these was Fitzherbert, whom he really loved, and who in former days had acted towards him with much kindness. Burke was told that he had been represented by this amiable man as the author of Junius ; and though this appeared incorrect, yet Fitzherbert had in a large company attempted to vindicate him from the imputation in so awkward a manner as to increase rather than to remove this general impression. Burke heard of this circumstance from Charles Townshend, the

brother of Thomas Townshend, junior, and son of the Honourable Thomas Townshend. With this family he had become acquainted many years before, and was always a welcome guest at Frogmire. Charles acted in a very friendly spirit in this unpleasant emergency ; and at length obtained from Burke a written declaration, on his honour, that he was not the author of Junius, and that he knew not who the author was.* In this correspondence Burke asserted, that to nine-tenths of his acquaintance he had denied the accusation. The author of Junius, whoever he might be, was never more mistaken than when, with his characteristic arrogance, he declared in his private letters, that Burke affectedly disclaimed this authorship so as rather to have it believed. Johnson said, that of his own accord Burke denied the imputation to him ; and his correspondence and obser-

* "I received your letter at the proper time, but delayed my answer to it until I had twice consulted my pillow. Surely, my situation is a little vexatious, and not a little singular. I am, it seems, called upon to disown the libels in which I am myself satirized as well as others. If I give no denial, things are fixed upon me which are not, on many accounts, very honourable to me. If I deny, it seems to be giving satisfaction to those to whom I owe none and intend none. In this perplexity, all I can do is to satisfy you, and to leave you to satisfy those whom you think worthy of being informed. I have, I dare say, to nine-tenths of my acquaintance, denied my being the author of Junius, or having any knowledge of the author, as often as the thing was mentioned, whether in jest or earnest, in style of disapprobation or of compliment. Perhaps I may have omitted to do so to you in any formal manner, as not supposing you to have any suspicion of me. I now give you my word and honour that I am not the author of Junius, and that I know not the author of that paper, and I do authorize you to say so. This will, I suppose, be enough, without showing my letter, which might have the air of being written for the satisfaction of other persons than I mean to give it to. I wish the satisfaction of fair and friendly men ; it would be vain to look to others."—Burke to Charles Townshend, November 24, 1771.

vations on this question show that he was far from considering it as an honour.*

Though it may seem a paradox, yet it is also a truth, that the intimate associates of a great man sometimes know him the least. Dr. Markham might surely have been supposed to be acquainted with Burke, since he had been seventeen years his close and confidential friend, had the greatest respect for his abilities, and had in his obscurity zealously endeavoured to promote his interests. Yet Burke had the mortification of finding that a friend older even than Fitzherbert suspected him of writing those letters, listened with assent to all that his political adversaries said against him, and appeared somewhat anxious to rid himself of so dangerous an acquaintance.

* "You observe very rightly, that no fair man can believe me to be the author of Junius. Such a supposition might tend, indeed, to raise the estimation of my powers of writing above their just value. Not one of my friends does, upon that flattering principle, give me for the writer; and when my enemies endeavour to fix Junius upon me, it is not for the sake of giving me credit for an able performance. My friends I have satisfied; my enemies shall never have any direct satisfaction from me. The Ministry, I am told, are convinced of my having written Junius, on the authority of a miserable bookseller's preface, which I have read since I saw you, in which there are not three lines of common truth or sense, and which defames me, if possible, with more falsehood and malignity than the libellers whom they pay for that worthy purpose. This argument of theirs only serves to show how much their malice is superior to their discernment. For some years, and almost daily, they have been abusing me in the public papers; and (amongst other pretences for their scurrility) as being the author of the letters in question. I have never once condescended to take the least notice of their invectives, or publicly to deny the fact upon which some of them were grounded. At the same time, to you, or to any of my friends, I have been as ready as I ought to be, in disclaiming, in the most precise terms, writings that are as superior perhaps to my talents, as they are most certainly different in many essential points from my regards and my principles."—Burke to Charles Townshend, Corresp. i. 268.

But there was some excuse for the divine. Since the time when he wrote to the Duchess of Queensbury in favour of Burke, he had prospered in the world. Lord Mansfield's friendship had been an assured passport to the highest honours, and the reverend doctor had attained them accordingly. There was a constitutional resemblance between the patron and the favoured clergyman. Dr. Markham was the type of a class of learned and excellent men, of whom some specimens may be always found in our great Universities. Excellent scholars, blameless in their morals, moderate in their opinions, they are essentially timid men, and regard with implicit respect the powers that be. On being once fortunately introduced within reach of the smiles of royalty, they make their way in Courts with a skill which veteran diplomatists might envy; and Dr. Markham was the faultless model of the courtly divine.

When Burke first knew him, he was, as we have seen, a Whig. He was a Whig when he solicited the Duke of Bedford's support in the time of the Grenville Administration; and had George II. been still alive, and the great Whig families and the principles of the Revolution still in favour at Court, Dr. Markham would doubtless have continued to be an irreproachable Whig. But the tide had turned. The new Sovereign hated aristocratic Whiggism; high ideas of the prerogative were once more entertained by the reigning monarch; there was virtually no disputed succession; and by degrees a new race of Tories sprung into existence. Of these Lord Mansfield was the unobtrusive apostle. Dr. Markham was one of his earliest and most promising disciples. He became among clergymen what his illustrious patron was among politicians, a kind of repre-

sentative Tory, and gloried in a name which, when he was first made head master of Westminster School, he would have indignantly disclaimed.

Though a convert to a new creed, he was in no danger of becoming a martyr. This year, 1771, which to Burke had been politically so disastrous, had been peculiarly fortunate to Dr. Markham. He was made Bishop of Chester in January ; he was made preceptor to the Prince of Wales in June ; and he gave so much satisfaction in this capacity, that he was shortly afterwards promised the next archbishopric which should fall vacant.

Burke's career during these five or six years had been still more extraordinary. Yet, as, according to the approved philosophical criticism of this age, so much depends on the point of view in which we look at human actions and speculative opinions, it necessarily follows that there were people who, not seeing Burke's conduct with his own eyes or with those of posterity, judged him with little favour or sympathy. Dr. Markham's point of view was the Court. Looked at from the standing-place of Buckingham House or Windsor Castle, there was much in the statesman's conduct to excite the courtly prelate's alarm. The orator's most indignant attacks on the ministerial measures had unfortunately all related to subjects which were understood to have received in an especial manner his Majesty's approbation. The Stamp Act, the expulsion and incapacitation of Wilkes, the letters of Barrington and Weymouth, the payment of the debts on the Civil List, and the system which had been exposed in the *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, were all matters on which the King had set his heart, and some of which were believed to have been peculiarly his own. Burke's name therefore

was seldom mentioned with approbation in the royal circle, and never by the lips of him from whom all honours, in the estimation of the new bishop and preceptor, justly descended. When to these acknowledged sins against royalty were added the imputed crimes of the Letters of Junius, which seemed to be primarily inspired by a personal hatred of the monarch, it is not surprising that Dr. Markham stood aghast at the extensive catalogue of offences which were at Court placed to his old friend's account. He had several times advised Burke to act so as to gain the King's favour; he had particularly recommended him in 1769 on no account to oppose the immediate liquidation of the Civil List debts; and on finding his advice neglected, Dr. Markham began to feel really angry with one who pertinaciously acted directly contrary to such recommendations.

At last Junius flew at Lord Mansfield, Dr. Markham's own peculiar benefactor. Of these attacks in particular, Burke was especially given out as the author; and even those who defended the Chief Justice, openly inscribed their letters to the man whom the Court and Ministers had now fully decided to be Junius. Zeno's epistle was followed by others signed respectively, Pliny Junior, Querist, Oxoniensis, Scævola; all making more or less directly the same accusation. Burke knew that many of these writers were in the pay of the Treasury, and that some of them must have received the countenance of Lord Mansfield. He found himself placed in a singular predicament: for not joining in the violent outcry against Lord Mansfield when his doctrines respecting libels and the power of juries were discussed in Parliament, he was publicly abused by the Opposition; and

for being thought the assailant of Lord Mansfield under the mask of Junius, he was reviled by the Court. It was a poor return for his really generous conduct to the Chief Justice in the House of Commons, that a vindication of the Judge's character should be blended with slanders upon the only orator of the Opposition who had ventured to stand forward in his defence.

Burke resolved to speak to Dr. Markham on the subject. They met one day at Kew, and had a long conversation. But the prelate was slippery, and feeling that he was on delicate ground, made repeated efforts to change the discussion from this particular question to general topics. On one subject however Burke thought that Dr. Markham was explicit; for the bishop insinuated that he might put it out of the power of any possible Administration to serve him. "Who is there," asked Burke, "but the King, who can restrain the power of any possible Administration?" "That is most certainly true," replied his mitred friend, with terse and significant energy. Dr. Markham afterwards, however, denied that Burke was right in concluding from this question and answer, that he was politically proscribed. The right reverend adviser wished it to be understood that he only expressed his fears of what might be the natural consequence of the statesman's conduct; and of such a result the good bishop had naturally a pious horror; for the fact of a man being out of favour at Court seemed to him the clearest proof that he was guilty of the most deadly sins.*

Finding that the personal interview had been unsatisfactory, Burke wrote two letters to the bishop, expressly calling his attention to the real question on which he

* Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 156.

wished to have an explanation with Lord Mansfield. These letters appear to have been couched in the most respectful terms. Burke only shows a sense of his own dignity while delivering his opinion, that it was not necessary for those who were zealous for Lord Mansfield's reputation to think his of no consideration. But the prelate thought it astonishing presumption in Burke, to send a message to the Chief Justice; and instead of delivering it, sat down and wrote two vehement letters of accusation against Burke, recapitulating all that his enemies said about him, accusing him of having broken into the House of Commons like a wolf into a fold of lambs, of snapping and biting at every one, of ill-treating the first men in the kingdom, of attacking in the style of the bear-garden Mr. Grenville, Charles Yorke, Sir William Bagot, Lord Barrington, and Mr. Rigby, and of converting his house into a hole of adders. His friendship for Lord Mansfield was also termed contemptible in the acquisition, and ridiculous in the loss; and such arrogance in a person of his condition pronounced absolutely intolerable. No man can revile like a bishop when he is really angry; and Dr. Markham's effusions, from the specimens of their style which have been preserved in the elaborate answer to them, appear to have gone to the extreme limits of episcopal acrimony. Burke never remembered in any age or country to have seen a letter resembling those of Dr. Markham, except Bacon's consolatory epistle to his enemy, Sir Edward Coke, when this sour lawyer had fallen into disgrace at Court. This was however not unlike Burke's own situation; and a Christian prelate, on his road to an archbishopric, thought himself justified in taking similar liberties with an old friend in a similar lamentable plight. The

only difference in the two cases was a purely personal one: George III. not being Queen Elizabeth; Dr. Markham, Lord Bacon; nor Mr. Attorney Coke, Edmund Burke.*

Burke himself seemed somewhat sensible of the difference. His reply is not more admirable for its spirit, eloquence, and conscious rectitude, than for its delicious irony about ill-informed sovereigns, timorous chief justices, incapable ministers, and timeserving bishops. But whatever momentary pain it gave him to receive such letters from one with whom he had had a lengthened acquaintance, and who had formerly endeavoured to befriend him, he found as soon as he sat down to write, that it was impossible in such circumstances to be seriously angry on paper. Genius asserted the indefeasible superiority. We may be glad that so admirable a defence of Burke's political conduct was written, and also, perhaps, not sorry that, judging from internal evidence, it was not sent to the prelate by whom it had been provoked.

That Burke estimated the prelate's character at its proper value, is proved by every line of this vindication. That he never again presumed to take a liberty with Dr. Markham without many apologies, and that, though on polite and apparently friendly terms, he was not ready to put himself under an obligation to the bishop, and carefully guarded against the possibility of receiving such another rebuke, may be easily seen in the next letter from Burke to Dr. Markham, when Dr. Leland, in his suit for the provostship of Trinity College, requested Burke to secure for him the prelate's good offices. It

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 140. See Bacon's Life and Works, edited by Mr. Basil Montagu, vol. xvi. p. 243.

was on a business in which one learned divine had a right to expect the support of another learned divine.

It was to prevent one of the most disgraceful jobs ever perpetrated even in Ireland, and to save a seat of learning from desecration. Yet Burke does not venture to ask the bishop's interposition in favour of his friend, except in the most studied manner; and he makes Dr. Leland's ignorance of the world the excuse for addressing the Bishop of Chester at all on the business.*

The belief that Burke and Junius were the same individual, which was in truth the principal cause of Dr. Markham's insulting letter, continued during his life, has been encouraged by all his biographers, and cannot be said, in defiance of all argument, to have completely subsided even in the present day. Indeed, within the last three years the claim has been positively revived.† It may therefore be expected that some notice should here be taken of this controversy, so far as it relates to Burke himself, though it has been very justly observed by one of the most eminent living authorities on the subject, that to prove that Burke was not Junius, is really a waste of time.‡ It may perhaps be doubted whether the discovery of the authorship of these letters has in itself the importance that has been attached to the question. The inquiry has become in English literature a kind of Chinese puzzle, on which many gentlemen love to display their ingenuity, and apparently with a result scarcely more profitable. The field of claimants would have been considerably narrowed, had many of their acute advocates condescended to study thoroughly the

* Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 227.

† Life of Burke, by Peter Burke.

‡ Mr. Macaulay's Critical and Historical Essays, vol. iii. p. 362.

letters themselves and the political history of the times, before forming theories which, after they had once been given to the world, it became a point of honour in their authors to maintain. It may be confidently asserted, that no person really acquainted with the political writings of both Burke and Junius, could ever have associated the two names together.

The author of a pamphlet entitled Junius proved to be Burke, may be taken as a fair specimen of those who speculate on this subject in defiance of all the laws of critical induction. He supposes, in contradiction to the facts contained in the letters themselves, that they were written in support of the Rockingham Administration; explains all their hostility on this assumption; and triumphantly affirms that he has undeniably proved them to be written by Burke. Though he writes in a very confident tone, speaks of his work as a demonstration rather than a discovery, and believes that after the appearance of his pamphlet there can be no further room for a single doubt on the matter, his argument is so weak and his acquaintance with the principles of the two writers so limited, that the only excuse for his ignorance is the fact, of which he judiciously informs his readers in his Preface, that he took up the subject as a relaxation from severer studies.*

The political leader who alone found entire favour in the eyes of Junius was not Lord Rockingham. His attachment to George Grenville is unmistakably indicated in the first letter. It may be seen pervading and animating the series until this statesman's death, and never more warmly than at times when Burke is known to have been decidedly opposed to Grenville. Junius was

* Junius proved to be Burke, 1826. Preface, p. 1.

in favour of the Stamp Act. Burke invariably condemned the Stamp Act. Junius declared that the Constitution could never be brought back to its original principles until triennial Parliaments were once more the rule. Burke maintained that the Constitution could not, in the circumstances of England at that period, survive three triennial elections. Junius hated political connections, advised the King to distrust all parties, and to call into the service of the Crown men of virtue and ability from every denomination. Burke considered that this dissolution of connections was one of the fundamental causes of the evils he deplored, and that there could really be no good and efficient Administration until party combinations, on distinct principles and under tried leaders, should be revived. Junius asserted that Lord Rockingham's Administration came into power under the mediation of Lord Bute ; that it was intrinsically feeble ; and that it finally dissolved in its own weakness. Burke stated that there was never the slightest correspondence between the Rockingham Administration and Lord Bute ; that so conscious was Lord Bute of this fact, that it was the only Government he was known publicly to oppose ; that no Ministry ever acted with more courage and decision ; and that it was only feeble from the disingenuous artifices of its opponents. Junius, after Grenville's death, looked to Lord Chatham as the champion of his principles, and heartily engaged in Chatham's personal conflict with Lord Mansfield. Burke remained steadily attached to Lord Rockingham, and strongly warned his leader against joining in Chatham's hostilities against Lord Mansfield. Junius fiercely maintained that the law of the land for juries to decide on the guilt or innocence of a libel was so clear and precise, that none but

a judge who wished to introduce arbitrary power could mistake it; and devoted his last efforts to bring about an impeachment of Lord Mansfield, as a bad man and a worse judge. Burke, in the great debate on the Libel Bill, maintained that the law, by the interpretation of Holt, Raymond, and other legal authorities, was open to doubt; went out of his way to speak respectfully of Lord Mansfield; and for this reason, in the account of the debate which was published in the Public Advertiser,—an account which has reasonably been attributed to the author of Junius,* and to which Burke wrote a reply,—he was invidiously accused of having praised Lord Mansfield.

This contrast might be carried far. It might be shown to exist in matters of opinion, on questions not exclusively political, in the style of their writings, and in the moral characteristics of the two men. But this examination would be needless. They who cannot see that there was a diametrical difference in the politics of Burke and Junius, such as rendered it humanly impossible for them to have been the same individual, will not be convinced with distinctions which may be less immediately obvious; and with those who have entered intimately into the spirit of Burke's life and works, the wonder will be, not that he should not have written the letters of Junius, but that he should have been thought capable of penning compositions which, as he himself declared, were in many essential points so contrary to his principles.†

During the autumn recess of 1771, Junius had entered precipitately into the politics of the city. He at-

* Woodfall's Junius. Letter on Libel Bill in Burke's Works and Correspondence, vol. vi.

† Works and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 135.

tempted to restore harmony between the two parties whose dissensions had torn asunder the Society of the Bill of Rights, and had induced Mrs. Catharine Macaulay, with the republican sternness of a Spartan matron, to assail her own brother. But the endeavours of Junius were unavailing ; and even he could not plunge in the noisome sewer about the Guildhall without becoming disgusted with its foulness. Burke would readily have predicted the consequences of such a headlong emersion, and would not have been very sorry for this catastrophe. Wilkes and his partisans were ignominiously defeated ; a Lord Mayor in the interest of the Court was chosen ; and Junius was so much disheartened at this occurrence, that he was determining to lay aside for ever the pen he had wielded with such terrible effect.*

But it was not even in his power to keep the wild agitation of the last two years alive. A law of Nature, which the most fiery political eloquence could not successfully resist, was in operation. A reaction had long set in ; and though the waves of popular passion in the metropolis, as nearest the centre of the recent convulsions, were still in some commotion, the apathetic languor which was felt throughout the kingdom, became general, and was almost unexampled in its paralyzing effect. All opposition for the moment was hopeless. Even the most ardent were dispirited, and could not but rejoice that the meeting of Parliament was delayed until after the Christmas holidays. As the Ministry was indeed in no favour, and the calm which prevailed a mere deadness of public spirit rather than the dictation of popular prudence, it was a most unhealthy symptom in the body politic. For the time, however, all efforts to animate

* Private Correspondence with Woodfall.

the inert mass being evidently useless, Lord Rockingham and Burke, after consulting together, resolved to keep quiet, to watch events, and husband their strength for a more propitious hour of action.*

* Annual Register, 1772, chap. vii. p. 81. Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham: Letter of Lord Rockingham to Dowdeswell, Dec. 19, 1771: vol. ii. p. 212.

CHAPTER XIX.

1772-1773.

FAITHFUL AMONG THE FAITHLESS.

IN this season of indifference, some momentous questions, which involved the fate of no Ministry, and had apparently no political consequences, were introduced to the attention of the Legislature. They were on subjects which of all others are the most difficult that can come before a statesman. Some of those perplexing controversies, half political and half religious, which only the present age has seen set at rest, and some of which are not yet settled, once more, after a sleep of the eighty-three years which had followed the passing of the Toleration Act of William and Mary, awoke, in the session of 1772, to trouble the minds of three generations. Burke confronted them boldly from the first moment of their resurrection. The complexion of all his future life depends on the candid recognition of the aspect he then assumed to the Protestant Dissenters, and to the Church of England.

The propriety of petitioning Parliament for a relief from a subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, had in the course of the last year been much discussed among a certain section of the clergy. A respected archdeacon appears to have inspired them with the design; and when the question was first agitated, there were many

conscientious divines who thought it not at all extraordinary that they should, though entertaining convictions the Church of England had invariably condemned, hold livings in the Establishment, and preach doctrines which nine-tenths of the people regarded as heterodoxical and impious. A society for applying to the Legislature for relief from signing the Articles, was speedily formed ; and from the place in which it assembled, it was called the Feathers Tavern Association. . Before the meeting of Parliament on the 21st of January, 1772, a petition was settled ; it was signed by more than two hundred clergymen of the Church of England, and more than sixty physicians and lawyers ; and on the 6th of February, Sir William Meredith moved for leave to present it to the House of Commons.

It gave rise to a very interesting debate. As the question of toleration was for that age quite novel, it was warmly supported by many of Burke's friends, and particularly by Lord John Cavendish and Sir George Savile, on the general principle of religious liberty. Most Members on the Opposition side of the House took the same view. They were surprised to see Burke rise, declare himself strongly against the reception of the petition, and argue that it was not a question of religious toleration at all. Many of those clergymen who were themselves interested in the fate of the application, had made efforts to be present in the strangers' gallery. They listened with much indignation to the comprehensive survey of the subject taken by the orator, who was believed to speak the sentiments of Lord Rockingham, and who, of all the Members attached to popular freedom, alone distinguished himself by his opposition to their prayer. The Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, who was

afterwards one of the most eminent of the Unitarian Dissenters, had long entertained doubts on the divinity of the Saviour ; and was therefore in the gallery, anxiously waiting the result of this debate, either to resign his vicarage of Catterick, or to remain in the Church, emancipated from the restraints of the Thirty-nine Articles. On hearing Burke's speech, and witnessing the applause with which it was received by many politicians who were not accustomed to cheer his orations, the hopes which the divine had conceived of accommodating his conscience with his vicarage, sunk within him ; and knowing that Burke had been called a Papist and a Jesuit, he could see nothing but unfairness, insincerity, and intemperance in this luminous disquisition on Dissenters and the Church. He wrote to his friend Dr. Priestley, giving him an account of the debate ; and said that Burke in particular declaimed violently against the petition in a long speech full of Popish ideas, and entirely like a Jesuit.*

The petitioners however had offered to sign the Bible. As Burke drew to the conclusion of his speech, he commented on this admission, which, with remorseless logic, he showed to be fatal to their cause. With the orator's arguments on the venerable but multifarious collection of writings which composed the Scriptures; on their utter inutility as a test of what doctrines a man might deduce

* Belsham's Memoirs of Theophilus Lindsey, p. 162. But even David Hume, in religious matters a Latitudinarian enough surely, would have assented to Burke's arguments on this question, as at once logical and philosophical, and not, with all respect to Mr. Lindsey, either illiberal or Jesuitical. "Ought any man," asks Hume, "to accept of an office or a benefice in an establishment while he declines compliance with the fixed and known rules of that establishment?" —Appendix to the Reign of James I., History of England.

from them ; and on the necessity, if the proposal were accepted, of defining what version and what particular books were to be received as the Bible, Dr. Lindsey in the gallery was more angry than even with the former part of this significant speech. Thunders of applause from the High Churchmen greeted Burke as he sat down. Sir George Savile rose, and spoke excellently in favour of the petition, but he could not do away with the impression that had been produced. The form in which the question had been brought forward was a mistake ; and the debate is principally memorable as the indication of what Burke's notions then were with respect to the Church, and as proving that his aversion to the political Dissenting preachers, and especially to the Unitarian ministers, whom he in his later life so deeply offended, had already begun. The discussion commenced at three o'clock in the afternoon, and was not concluded until eleven that night, when two circumstances which Burke considered quite extraordinary, and which were certainly ominous, diversified the usual routine of his political life. He voted with Ministers and their High Church supporters ; and he voted in a great majority.*

But the favour he had won from the country gentlemen was not of long continuance. He soon gave Sir Roger Newdigate, Sir William Bagot, and their sturdy friends, cause of offence even about those church affairs in which they perhaps thought they were secure of his support. It was fated that in this session there should be no mistake as to what his ideas of toleration were ;

* See the remark in the Annual Register, 1772, p. 89. See also the debate in the Cavendish MSS., Bibl. Egerton., in the British Museum, vol. 233. Burke's speech will be found sufficiently legible, pp. 55-70 of that volume.

how far he would go with the High Churchmen; and on what ground the Dissenters might count on his utmost championship.

Mr. Seymour, shortly after the Debate on the Thirty-nine Articles, moved for leave to introduce a Bill to extinguish the dormant claims of the Church, as Sir George Savile's bill had recently done those of the Crown. The principle was similar. Apparently it ought to have met with similar success. But the country gentlemen thought that the Church was weak, and required to be treated with a tenderness which many of them had not shown to the Crown. Burke's arguments, when directed against their strongest passions, were powerless; and the Bill was not even allowed to be introduced.*

He not long afterwards retrograded still further in the estimation of the zealous Tories. They began to be really alarmed. It seemed that the Church was never to have rest; for on the 3rd of April a Bill was brought in to relieve the Dissenting Ministers from subscribing to those Articles in which, according to the Toleration Act, they were compelled to profess their belief. In the debate on the petition of the English Clergymen, many who opposed their desire, and Burke in particular, had declared that they would gladly give that relief to Dissenters, because it came legitimately within the principle of toleration. This measure had been suggested by these declarations. He was one of its most ardent advocates. Replying to the objections of its opponents, he asked, how could it be dangerous to the State when Lord North and his colleagues, those watchful Ministers who never slumbered nor slept, were not at their posts; and when Mr. George Onslow, who had been appointed

* Annual Register, 1772, p. 90.

the Prime Minister's Deputy for the occasion, sat in Moses's chair officially expounding the law and the prophets? And how could it be dangerous to the Church when the Articles to which this Bill relieved the Nonconformist Ministers from subscribing, were not the distinctive Articles of the Church of England, but were essentially Calvinistic, and peculiar to Presbyterianism? The energy with which he pleaded the cause of toleration, won the admiration of men who were strongly prejudiced against him and who keenly resented the part he had taken in opposing the late petition of the English Clergy. This logical consistency was beyond their appreciation. Dr. Lindsey must have been extremely surprised on learning from Dr. Priestley, who was present during the discussion, how admirably Mr. Burke had spoken in favour of the Dissenters. To Belsham, the compiler of Lindsey's Memoirs, this fact, as contrasted with Burke's conduct in the former debate, was equally incomprehensible.*

The Bill was also supported by some of the Ministers, and was carried through the House of Commons. In the House of Lords it was however less fortunate. Between the Peers and the Dissenters there was but little sympathy; some of the leading Bishops sounded the warning trumpet; on the second reading, the Bill was thrown out, only twenty-nine Lords voting in its favour, and one hundred and two composing the overwhelming majority.

Yet many of the same Right Reverend and Right Honourable Lords Spiritual and Temporal, whose consciences were so very scrupulous about granting liberty directly to Dissenters to preach without subscribing a

* "Mr. Burke spoke admirably in our favour."—Priestley to Lindsey. Priestley's Works, vol. i. p. 164.

Calvinistic profession of faith, although the law was daily violated with impunity, assisted with indecent haste in carrying through the Upper House the Royal Marriage Bill, which outraged all that had hitherto been held sacred, by making the validity of the matrimonial ceremony depend, when contracted by persons who had not attained the age of twenty-five years, on the previous sanction of the Sovereign. This Bill loudly announced that Hobism, and no permanent moral or divine principle, was for the future to regulate the marriages of the Royal Family, as distinguished from the marriages of the rest of the community ; and every Prelate who was so anxious for the safety of the Establishment, and yet, to please the King, voted for this measure, acted in opposition to the most solemn admonition of the Christian Church.

In the House of Commons the Bill met with a much less courteous reception. It was known that the King considered it as personal to himself, and every influence was strained to secure an obedient majority. The marriage of the Duke of Gloucester with Lady Waldegrave, which had long been suspected, but not openly acknowledged, and the recent marriage of the Duke of Cumberland with Mrs. Horton, showed indeed that some enactment was necessary ; but the different sections of the Opposition had the strongest objections to the clauses of a Bill which, in Burke's opinion, united all the worst vices which it was possible for a legislative measure to embody.*

The minority were on this occasion reinforced by a new and vigorous auxiliary. Dissatisfied with Lord North, and anticipating the Bill, Charles Fox, on the very

* Annual Register, 1772.

day when the Royal Message to the two Houses on the subject was delivered, had resigned office. His oratorical powers and his private vices had developed themselves in an equal and progressive ratio. He was the talk of the town, both for the extraordinary ability which he displayed in Parliament and for his losses at the gaming table; and among able politicians as among dissipated men of fashion, in the House of Commons as at Almack's, he seemed naturally to take the lead. Sitting up all night, with his embroidered coat turned inside-out for luck, a leather apron at his breast to protect his ruffles, his plumed hat exchanged for a broad-brimmed straw, with a high crown surrounded with a garland of flowers and ribbons, and a mask on his face to conceal the play of his features during the fluctuations of the game, such, according to high authority, was the appearance of this dissipated young patrician and his gay companions as they wasted their fortunes at the faro-table. In later years Charles Fox was as much distinguished by the slovenliness of his dress, as he was at this time distinguished in the House of Commons by his feathers and lace, as one of the most elegant of the Maccaroni.* His constitution appeared scarcely to feel the natural effects of such a harassing and exhausting pursuit of pleasure. In the House of Commons he was ever fresh, animated, and energetic; and he never spoke better than after drinking or gaming all night. He was three-and-twenty years of age, loved by his friends, admired by all who heard him in the House of Commons, a prodigy both of eloquence and profligacy, with little political knowledge, and with the only fixed opinions that the expulsion of Wilkes was most just, that Lord Hardwicke's

* Wraxall's Historical Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 229.

Marriage Act was a most oppressive and aristocratic measure, and that the Bill he resigned to oppose was, if possible, still more blamable. Family considerations, and no difference in principle, induced him to leave office and to embark for once in a struggle against the Court. He had as yet an absolute horror of joining in a systematic course of opposition ; and even in resigning his place, spoke of such a contingency as the only danger to which he could be exposed.* While attacking, he therefore took care to compliment Lord North ; and while acting with Burke, let it be seen clearly that there was no connection between himself and the Rockingham party.

Burke understood the manœuvre. He said one night, that the opposition of Charles Fox and his brother to the Minister, was but the opposition of half an hour. Fox, on the other hand, sneered at the Rockinghams for going into the preamble of the Bill, and asserted that they always defeated their own purposes. Still these discordant associates, assisted by Conway, whom Horace Walpole had induced, for the sake of his niece, the Duchess of Gloucester, to oppose the Court, as he had formerly encouraged his tool to seek the King's favour, fought the Bill stoutly clause by clause in committee. The number of the minority was much larger in many divisions than could have been expected from the lull of party politics with which the session began. For the moment, the activity of the Opposition revived. The logical energy of Fox and the splendid oratory of Burke, blazing with wit and variegated with the richest tints of the imagination, formed a gigantic obstacle, which the servile followers of

* "I think myself very safe from going into opposition, which is the only danger."—Fox to Lord Ossory, 21st February, 1772. *Memoirs and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 73.

the Court had some difficulty in surmounting : yet it was at last overcome ; and a glaring moral and religious anomaly became, in obedience to the Sovereign's wishes, the law of the land.*

The philosophy of marriage was soon again discussed. One of the peculiarities of Charles Fox's character was the romantic idea he entertained on this question, and which was more in keeping with that of a young and enthusiastic poet than of a grave statesman or a reckless man of fashion who had been so early inured to all the vice and folly of the world. He sympathized ardently with the unselfish and confiding attachments of young people, and thought it cruel and aristocratic for parents and legislators to put any restrictions on minors from entering into this sacred and permanent engagement. His father had strongly opposed the Marriage Bill of 1753, at the time of its enactment ; and on the 7th of April Charles Fox was to move for leave to introduce the measure he had promised, to remedy evils which he thought the existing law had caused.

His Parliamentary fame had extended beyond the precincts of St. Stephen's. Retired politicians once more returned to the scene they had long quitted, to witness the expected display. The object, however, of so much curiosity was little anxious about the effect he might produce. He had not even read the Bill the most important clauses of which he wished to repeal. He had lost

* The manuscript journals of Walpole, as quoted by Lord Holland in the Memorials and Correspondence of Fox, give the best account yet known of the opposition to this Bill. See also the debate on the second reading : Cavendish MSS., Bibl. Egerton., vol. 235 ; and Burke's amendment in committee, vol. 238, p. 173, of the same MSS.

thousands at Newmarket on the previous day, had been drinking all night, and had only that morning returned to town. Yet he acquitted himself well. His speech was unstudied, but graceful and perspicuous, exhibiting throughout the calm consciousness of power, rather than the desire to make an exhibition.

After Lord North and some other Members had spoken against the Bill, and some of Fox's boon companions had gallantly supported it, Burke stood up. His opening sentences contained a fine compliment to Fox, "who," said the great orator, "in a measure by which he would take away paternal power, is influenced by filial piety, and is led into it by a natural but to him inevitable and real mistake, in supposing that the ordinary race of mankind advance as fast towards maturity of judgment and understanding as he does." Burke then went into a brilliant dissertation on marriage, of which he maintained that mere animal propagation was not the sole end, and that the question was not alone of how many, but of how many useful citizens the community should be composed. He dwelt with great force on the impropriety of permitting men to form the matrimonial engagement at a time of life when they were legally incapable of contracting any other, and on the unreasonableness of authorizing men to introduce citizens into the State before they could be reasonably expected to provide for their maintenance. Horace Walpole heard this speech. He was astonished at the variety of Burke's language, the profusion of his metaphors, and the correctness of his diction. It had, in his opinion, but one fault: it was too copious; two-thirds of it resembled a book of speculative political philosophy. Comparing Walpole's description of this oration with one on the same subject which

was discovered among Burke's papers, and which by the editors is ascribed to the year 1781, it will be found to answer to it in every particular; and there is every reason for believing that this is a rough sketch of the identical speech which was really spoken in the session of 1772, though he doubtless delivered a similar oration when the question was again revived.* The internal evidence points to the same conclusion. The compliment to Fox's youth would be unmeaning in 1781, when he was thirty-two years of age; but it is peculiarly appropriate in 1772, when his precocious abilities were the marvel of all men.

Burke and Fox now stood forth as the leading politicians of the future. After witnessing the debate of that evening on the Marriage Bill, the attentive observer could not but speculate on what might be their relative destinies. It appeared that Burke's political principles were not so favourable to mere popular freedom as the world supposed; and that when he was not restrained by his obligations to his party, he exhibited a strong leaning to settled government.† Fox, on the contrary, though acting on the most unconstitutional principles in office, and at once defying and insulting the people, had lately raised a cry for liberty, and had just strongly denounced the usurpations of an aristocracy.‡ What did these signs portend? Whether was Burke or Fox likely to be the

* See the speech in the Works and Correspondence, vol. vi., and compare it with Walpole's remarks in his Journal of April 7th, 1772. The antithetical allusion to filial piety and paternal power may also be deciphered in the shorthand notes of Sir H. Cavendish: Cavendish MSS., Bibl. Egerton., in the British Museum, vol. 240, p. 5.

† Walpole's Journal, April 7, 1772.

‡ See Gibbon's Letter to his friend Mr. Holroyd, Feb. 21, 1772. Miscellaneous Works, vol. ii. p. 77.

more successful politician? Burke, earnest, laborious, patiently deducing principles, was, with all his brilliant powers, negligent of the small arts which manage men. Fox had no scruples. He was dashing, frank, jovial, and his want of knowledge might be a kind of recommendation to idle patricians who cared little for truth, but much for the mere consequences of a night's debate. It was therefore not difficult to foresee a time when, as a mere party leader, Fox might be more acceptable to the rising generation than a stern and careworn man, the extent of whose mental powers was far beyond their comprehension, and the regularity of whose private life rebuked their extravagant follies.

Colonel Burgoyne, one of Fox's dearest friends, his companion at Newmarket and at the gaming-table, a gallant officer, a wit, a dramatist, and a man of fashion, had seconded his motion for the repeal of the Marriage Bill. He was the cause of the next difficulty of the Opposition. Moving for a select committee of inquiry into the affairs of the East India Company, he was supported by the Ministry and Lord Shelburne's people in the House of Commons; and the Rockingham party, with a few unconnected members, were left to object vainly to the proposal. Burke, whenever the state of India was debated, had blamed the apathy of Ministers, who contented themselves with extorting four hundred thousand a year from the Company, and allowed their servants to plunder and misgovern as they pleased. He continued warmly to defend the great corporation, and considered the Ministry as the real culprits in all the riot and disorder that so grossly prevailed. But the motion was agreed to without a division; the memorable Committee, of which Burgoyne was chairman, chosen by

ballot : and the Opposition was, if possible, still weaker and more disorganized than when the session began. Yet the eloquence of the Member for Wendover flowed forth in a gushing stream ; and though the sunshine of success did not play upon it, it still beautified the monotonous and barren landscape, in which Lord North sat down contentedly under the delusion that he really governed the British Empire.

The Minister had but one happy anniversary. It was to the afternoon in which he opened his budget of the year that his admirers proudly referred, as proving what he could do.* Lord North's financial expositions were usually clear ; they were considered abler than they perhaps really were, because at that time there was a dearth of good Chancellors of the Exchequer ; and this is a class of statesmen in which England, for so very practical a country, is never very fertile.

This year he had a new plan of finance. Burke diversified the debate on the Budget with a speech which carried the House far beyond the region of figures. The Ministerialists were impatient, but he was pertinacious, and would not sit down. He was never more witty than when the Ministerialists were angry. But he put them this time into a good humour by what is generally efficacious, a laugh at the orator himself who had unsuccessfully endeavoured to make them laugh at their own leader. "The Treasury," said Burke, alluding particularly to this day of triumph, "as it has been managed of late, is like Noah's ark, and the Minister comes down in state to the House, attended by his creatures of all denominations, his beasts clean and unclean. With such however as they are, he opens his budget, he edifies us with

* Wraxall's Historical Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 137.

a speech, and then he sits down. What is the consequence? One half of the House goes away. A gentleman on the opposite side gets up and harangues on the state of the nation, and in order to keep matters even at the close of his speech, another half retires. Another gentleman follows the example of his predecessor, and by this means rids the House of another half." A loud and general burst of merriment interrupted the orator, and called his attention to the blunder he had made. But he was not disconcerted, and readily answered, "Sir, I take the blunder to myself, and express my satisfaction at having said anything that can put the House in good humour. Whether the House be emptied by one half, or two halves, or three halves, the public is equally deserted."*

He continued his speech. A sarcastic attack on Lord Sandwich at the head of the Admiralty, as a man of pure hands and hallowed heart, an Israelite indeed, could only be annoying to the Treasury Bench. But Burke afterwards delivered his thoughts on military establishments, and members might well listen to what he said. The national policy of England, he argued, was not to follow the example of the great military Powers, who maintained in a time of peace standing armies which, by keeping young and vigorous men in idleness, instead of, by their labour and industry, adding to the wealth of the State, exhausted the strength that ought to be reserved for war, and left the country destitute of new recruits, without whom an army of veterans soon mouldered away. These were short-sighted politics. England had acted on other principles. She had entered into wars with ten thousand men against three hundred thousand, and at

* Collected Speeches, vol. i. p. 128.

first she had been embarrassed. But with a people naturally warlike she soon learnt the tactics of her adversary. Possessed of wealth, possessed of people, possessed of all the sinews of war, every day she gained upon her enemy. As his spirit fell, hers rose. She might commence badly, but she ended gloriously ; while the great armies of other Powers were but a show during peace, and melted away during a war, leaving nothing but a dreadful waste behind.*

These were the ideas of both an economist and a statesman, and they need no comment. On other matters of political economy Burke also enlightened the House of Commons in the course of the session. A Corn Bill, founded on the resolutions of the previous year, and which the shortness of that session hindered from being further extended, was brought forward. Again, on this subject, as on the two former occasions, his knowledge was universally admitted. He had no rival as an economist. He was on ground which had become peculiarly his own ; and in two speeches that he made, one when the resolutions were proposed, the other in Committee on the Bill, he shone transcendently, earnestly counselling the House, as before, to consider the interests of the farmer and the manufacturer as inseparable, to encourage rather than to restrict exportation, and not, through a mistaken and utterly futile zeal for the poor, to interfere with the natural development of trade.†

But this Corn Bill met with an unexpected fate. As the Lords still excluded the Commons and all strangers from their House, the quarrel between the two estates continued. It was fomented on the part of the Peers by

* Collected Speeches, vol. i. pp. 129-132.

† Parliamentary History, vol. xvii. p. 480.

many petty provocations. On one occasion they sent a Bill down to the House of Commons by a Master in Chancery and a Clerk Assistant ; and they now altered the Corn Bill by striking out a clause which maintained the bounty on exportation. The Commons were in a rage. The Lords had at length altered a Money Bill. Members exhorted each other in passionate language to uphold their privileges. Burke accused the Peers of ignorance ; and, while entreating the popular representatives not to answer an affront with an affront, advised them also not to submit to this assumption of superiority. Who, he asked, would not be degraded by turning round upon a Wapping landlady and giving her reproach for reproach ? He assured his hearers that when he had been ordered to carry up Bills to the Lords, he had been kept sitting for three hours among their lordships' footmen. The Speaker, saying that he would do his part in maintaining the dignity of the House, threw the Bill over the table. The House adjourned, and as they went out, Members of all parties kicked the unfortunate Bill like a football from one side to the other.*

A few days afterwards Parliament was prorogued. But, as Burke had foretold, the Select Committee on the East India Company found it impossible to bring their investigations to a close ; and with the permission of the House, they continued sitting through the summer. It was seen that the contest between the Crown and the Company, which had begun in 1767, must come shortly to an issue ; and that in the next session the Government of the new Indian Empire would probably receive considerable modifications.

* Parliamentary History, vol. xvii. p. 515.

The Directors, dreading what they felt to be impending, were anxious to avert the storm. They considered many expedients, and at last decided on one which, had it been carried into effect, might have produced great results in British India, and would certainly have changed the whole aspect of British politics. Grateful to Burke for the manner in which he had steadily defended the rights of the Company, and paying a becoming homage to his great abilities, they resolved to send him out at the head of a supervisorship of three, with the most extensive powers, to inquire into and to reform the abuses of Indian administration. The plan originated with Sir George Colebrooke, the deputy-chairman; was by him proposed to Lord Rockingham and Burke; and they were told that it met with the general concurrence of the Directors.

On the project, Lord Rockingham said nothing either to Sir George or Burke. It was indeed his custom to express no opinion on the propriety of his political friends accepting or rejecting offers that were made to them; but Burke, thinking, and not unreasonably, that he ought to have been an exception to this general rule, was at first surprised, hurt, and disappointed by the Marquis's silence. He consulted the Duke of Richmond at Goodwood; and his Grace took a kindly interest in a decision which would so materially affect Burke's fortunes. He consulted the members of his own family; and they were fully capable of giving him the best and the most disinterested advice. But it was not until, with the consent of his relatives, he had fully refused the appointment, that he communicated at all with Lord Rockingham.

The Marquis was a proud man. He did not like

to confess, what was indeed the truth, that Burke's services were at this time, more than perhaps at any other, absolutely indispensable. Nor did he like to place himself under so great an obligation as to take upon himself the responsibility of advising Burke to refuse an offer pecuniarily so advantageous. The party had recently sustained losses from desertion and from natural causes; it had little hold on public sympathy; and without Burke, must inevitably have disappeared as a distinct connection in the State. This the Duke of Richmond candidly confessed, when he wrote that Burke had more merit than any one else, in keeping this band of politicians together. The Rockingham party is from henceforth, until the American war began to alarm the people, to be regarded as entirely the work of Burke. It was the courage, the energy, and the perseverance of this one man that held these earls, marquises, and dukes true to their Whig traditions, united in their principles, and faithful to their leader. The truth however must be confessed. He kept the party alive for other men to reap the fruits of his labours; and in providing for their political fortunes, he disinterestedly sacrificed his own.

He had, when this offer was made, every worldly motive to induce him to accept the situation. In the temper of the people, who were more apathetic than at any other time during his experience; and with the powerful majorities of the Court entirely subservient to the Ministerial policy, all opposition appeared not only useless, but even ridiculous. It was but keeping up a form which accommodated the Government, but was even mischievous for any other object. Lord Rockingham himself recommended a discontinuance of an open

resistance to the measures of the Ministry. Some of his friends advised a temporary secession, others were in complete despair, many querulous and impatient. Besides, Lord Rockingham's health was far from good. He was so delicate, that at any moment he might be compelled to retire entirely from public life; a report to this effect was even in circulation at this time, and in consequence Burke received many malicious condolences from hostile politicians. Lord North and the Ministry would doubtless have readily acquiesced in a project which effectually removed their most formidable enemy. He could return in a few years, rich, independent of all connection, and instead of being any longer the tool of a proud aristocracy, might render them the instruments of his ambition. Nothing therefore but the purest public virtue, nothing but personal disinterestedness carried to the extreme, could have induced him to make a sacrifice which for ever should at least have preserved him from the reproach of any mercenary or self-seeking designs. It would be difficult to name another politician who would have acted in the same manner. His conduct contrasts strangely with that of the great noblemen of his party, whose fortunes rendered them independent of office, and whom he was daily exhorting to be of good cheer and to persevere.

How noble some of these exhortations were, the public have only lately had the means of knowing. Next to Lord Rockingham himself, the Duke of Richmond had gradually become the most prominent nobleman in this select Whig connection. His abilities were not indeed commanding; but what he wanted in intellect he made up by diligence and pertinacity. Though slow and hesitating in his delivery, there was an eccentric im-

portunity in his speeches which, when set off by his intrepid and manly bearing, rendered him a formidable opponent even to distinguished orators. His friends remembered the time when he confronted Chatham in the day of his power, urging the nobility not to be brow-beaten by an insolent minister ; and when the impetuous Earl himself seemed to recoil in confusion before Richmond's unexpected audacity. He was the most handsome man of his time, and he retained even until late in life traces of that beauty which had distinguished his French ancestress, Charles II.'s Duchess of Portsmouth. Between him and the Duke of Grafton, both being illegitimate descendants of this sovereign, and considering themselves as princes of the royal blood, there had long been a not ungraceful rivalry ; but in general amiableness and purity of morals, Richmond was as superior to Grafton as in the nobleness of his figure and the beauty of his features. His manners being those of a polite and high-bred gentleman, contrasted favourably with the more studied and affected courtesy of Chatham's vigorous ally, the Earl of Shelburne. Though he afterwards distinguished himself by proposing the most extensive democratic reform in the representation which has ever been developed in the House of Lords, and which, singularly enough, appears to have excited much less surprise then than it would do now, he was never personally popular. As a great nobleman, he was considered somewhat parsimonious ; and it was sarcastically said, that his kitchens were the coldest rooms of his magnificent mansions in town and at Goodwood. As a politician, he was anxious, restless, and busy ; but sometimes in office was thought indolent, because he wanted to do too many things at once, and

did not always succeed. His great fault, as Burke candidly told him, was that of dissipating his mind with too many pursuits. - He was fond of hunting. He was fond of society. He was fond of pictures. He was fond of the science of fortification. An extensive proprietor of India stock, he took a warm interest in the politics of Leadenhall-street, and in this field of contention stood forward from the ranks of Opposition as Lord Sandwich did from those of the Government. Though not then wavering in his political faith, and indeed firmly attached to Lord Rockingham, he saw with despair the increasing weakness of his friends, regretted that their respected leader had not accepted office when it was offered to him in 1767, and attributed many of the misfortunes of their common party to this uncommon error.*

The Duke was this autumn in a very desponding mood. That which delicacy prevented him from hinting to Lord Rockingham, he unreservedly expressed to Burke ; and both in letters and in conversation he sadly bewailed their lowering political prospects. It seemed to give him relief to pour his sorrows into this sympathizing bosom ; and day after day, as the time for renewed exertion approached, the Duke of Richmond's forebodings became more and more gloomy. Finding that the Cavendishes and other members of the party disapproved of the partial secession which had been proposed, he wrote to Burke that he would sacrifice his own opinion, and with the more readiness because they were in such a very bad condition that it was of very

* Walpole's Memoirs of George III., vol. i. p. 28. Burke's Correspondence, *passim*. Wraxall's Hist. Mem. vol. ii. p. 311. Posth. Memoirs, vol. i. p. 281. The Rolliad.

little consequence what course they might pursue. Burke had asked him to be in town before Parliament met; but such a request, his Grace said, was quite unreasonable. All was very bad. Lord Rockingham did more with the party than any one else could, but even he could not do impossibilities, and make it what it ought to be.

Burke became alarmed at the receipt of this letter. It would answer no purpose to allow the Duke to abandon the field in utter despair, at the moment too when the business of the East India Company was about to be seriously agitated in Parliament, and when Richmond's rank, wealth, and industry would be of such essential service. To animate him to further efforts, Burke therefore, on the 17th of November, wrote a most elaborate and eloquent reply, in which he entered into all the causes of their political weakness, and gave him the most powerful reasons for continuing the struggle. When perused with the object for which it was written fully in view, this epistle appears to us one of the noblest and most judicious of Burke's compositions. Skilfully adapted to the character of the man to whom it was addressed, it candidly informed him of his deficiencies, pointed out to him the goal he ought ever to have before his eyes, and showed that a mere momentary success in politics was to a high-minded English nobleman but a small matter in comparison with the example he might leave to those to whom he must transmit his worldly honours. So long as an aristocratic spirit is to pervade in any degree the politics of England, this letter must be thought to express the real philosophy of an English aristocracy.*

It delighted the Duke of Richmond. He thanked Burke for it in a more cheerful spirit than he had written

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 372.

for some time, and said, that though it was long, it was not long enough. He prepared to set out as Burke had desired him, to come to town to assist in getting the Rockingham party together to resist the designs of the Ministry against the East India Company, for which purpose Parliament had been early summoned. Burke however wrote to him again, and the Duke, construing this letter into a kind of reprieve, put off his arrangements, and thought only of fox-hunting. Fox-hunting, thought Burke, at a time when the party is in danger of dissolution !

But the Marquis was as much inclined to stay in the country as the Duke. Burke had anxiously entreated Lord Rockingham not to leave the party without the gentle but always beneficial influence of his presence as the session drew nigh. Here again he was disappointed. The excuse of health was sufficient for Lord Rockingham to remain at Wentworth until after Christmas ; and this excuse Burke was fain to accept with apparent acquiescence. He saw that there would be nothing but disorganization in the party, and that whatever measures the Ministry might propose relating to India, would be servilely adopted.

The Company was thought insolvent. Though to outward appearance so prosperous, the Directors could not command money. If the revenues of Bengal were enormous, the expenses of the Company were in equal proportion. What with the lavish profusion of their civil and military establishments ; the tribute to the Mogul ; the enforced payment of four hundred thousand a year to the Government at home ; the sums spent in building fortifications which were mere pretences for peculation, and for which they had accepted bills exceeding a million

in amount; an improvident arrangement they had made about the exportation of tea; and the uncertainty and confusion which the negligence of the Ministry had introduced into Leadenhall-street, the merchant princes of the Asiatic Empire appeared in the position of bankrupt tradesmen. All who had any differences with the Directors swelled the clamours against them, and loudly called on the Government to put these Eastern possessions into the hands of the Crown. Popular prejudices concurred in recommending the design, which the King and his advisers had long cherished. After Burke had declined the office he had been requested to fill, another expedient had been adopted, and another commission of six supervisors had been chosen. But it could not venture forth until Parliament had discovered what its intentions were; and, with many misgivings, all who were interested in the prosperity of the Company, looked impatiently for the 26th of November, when the session peculiarly devoted to Indian affairs was to begin.*

The day arrived. Neither Lord Rockingham nor the Duke of Richmond, nor even the untiring Dowdeswell, was in town; and on Burke alone devolved the whole weight of Opposition. Never was he placed in a more unenviable position. As the passions of the Court and the people flowed in the same direction, all resistance, even to the hasty and inconsiderate schemes of the Government, could not only be without any satisfactory consequence, but the more hasty and inconsiderate they might be, they would in the same proportion both be acceptable to the majority and injurious to the intrepid few who objected to such precipitate legislation. Members declaimed against the East India Company. Lord

* Annual Register, 1773, chap. vi.

North moved for a secret committee of thirteen. Burgoynes informed the House of his intention to propose the revival of his select committee of the last session, which had already published two reports that had much inflamed the public mind. Both propositions were adopted. Two committees, one select, and the other secret, were to sit at the same time; and the Ministers saw not what Burke had pointed out to them, the absurdity of these rival bodies, differently constituted, the one in darkness and the other in light, pursuing similar inquiries. Though he took so much interest in Indian affairs, and was more laborious than any other Member of the House, he was not chosen in the ballot for either of these committees; and he seems to have been purposely excluded by Lord North, who of course had virtually the nomination of both, and was fully capable of preventing the choice from falling on the most energetic enemy of a policy that had already been predetermined.

Within ten days of its election, the secret committee surprised the Opposition, but not the Ministers, with a report recommending the House to proceed at once to prevent the Company, on economical considerations, from sending out the supervisorship which had been already appointed.

A Bill with this object was immediately introduced. The Company promised to suspend their commission; but this pledge was not thought sufficient. The Administration pushed the Bill vigorously through its various stages; and all the resistance of Burke and Dowdeswell, who had hurried up to London, only showed their Parliamentary impotence. Burke had the strongest constitutional objections to the course the Ministers were taking. He had talked privately with Members; he had

given his friends no rest ; and he met with nothing but vexation.

The Duke of Richmond had been at last prevailed upon to disappoint his party of foxhunters, and prepared to do his duty resolutely in the House of Lords. He was affected by the zeal with which Burke had thrown himself into the unequal contest ; but the Duke frankly told him, in a moment of confidence, the reason why his energy and importunity sometimes produced so little effect. "Although I am far from thinking so myself," said his Grace, "other people suspect, my dear Burke, that you must have some strong private reason for opposing so indefatigably these Ministerial measures." * He laboured in private ; he laboured in public ; and the earnestness with which he acted was interpreted unfavourably by men who could not appreciate such disinterested industry. This was his reward. He appears to have had this recent lesson, which the Duke of Richmond had taught him, in his mind when he wrote to Lord Rockingham, giving him an account of these political proceedings, and observed that people in the House of Commons judged of the purity of a man's intentions in proportion to his languor in endeavouring to carry them into execution. Hence his ardour was frequently so unavailing, and that on this occasion his own words were literally fulfilled. The two Parliamentary inquiries

* "I remember, some years ago," wrote Burke to Fox, on the 8th of October, 1777, "when I was preparing some points with great eagerness and anxiety, and complaining with great vexation to the Duke of Richmond of the little progress I made, he told me kindly, and I believe very truly, that though he was far from thinking so himself, other people could not be persuaded I had not some latent private interest in pushing these matters, which I urged with an earnestness so extreme and so much approaching to passion."

formed a meat-jack. The select committee was the leaden weight ; the secret committee, the flyer ; and what with the slow motion of the one, and the rapid motion of the other, the unfortunate Company was effectually roasted.*

The Rockingham party suffered in this culinary process as much as the corporation they defended. Some of the men who had objected to the temporary secession were most forward in these debates in showing their dissent from their friends, and were loudly encouraged by the ministerial side of the House. Burke stood firmly to the principle, that the Government had no right, after leaving the administration of the new Empire in the Company's hands for six years without providing against any abuses, and on the single condition of the payment of four hundred thousand a year, to turn round upon the Directors and blame them for what the Ministers were really themselves responsible. What had Lord North been doing all these years ? He had drawn more than two millions from the revenues of the Company, without considering whether or not it could be spared, and he was now legislating in a passion because the Directors found their funds exhausted. It was not surprising that all the machinery of the Bengal Government should, in obedience to the orders from the Directors, have been strained for the purpose of raising money, when the question between the Company and the Ministry had hitherto been solely one of money. Downing-street squeezed Leadenhall-street ; Leadenhall-street was therefore compelled to squeeze its servants in India, who were in their turn compelled to squeeze the natives ; and when the dregs were drained to the last drop, but not before, the im-

* Collected Speeches, vol. i. p. 147.

maculate Prime Minister and his satellites were indignant that they were compelled to return in a loan to the Company part of what ought never to have been taken from it at all, what was really wrung from the fears of the Directors, and what they never were in a condition to pay. For these reasons Burke regarded it as most unjust and impolitic to take advantage of the Company's distresses, and to deprive it of privileges which they had hitherto exercised, which had been acknowledged in the last treaty of peace, but of which the Government, at once a party and the judge, now summarily disposed. Not only was the East India Company, as it then existed, an anomaly, but a novel anomaly; and questions which from custom seem to us clear, were most difficult to the philosophical legislator at the close of 1772. It will soon appear that the revolution which the Ministers made in the Company's affairs also produced an important revolution in Burke's mind with respect to the government of India. Meanwhile he resolutely went into the lobby against the passing of the Bill which prohibited the Company from exercising its powers to send out the supervisorship; and the party, from many adverse circumstances that it was impossible to control, divided but twenty-eight.*

To this result events had long been tending. Open enemies, lukewarm friends, and intriguing rivals, had all been industriously attempting to destroy the only connection which had acted steadily on principle through so many inglorious years. Yet though apparently expiring, it could not be extinguished. With Burke as one of the corporate members of this political body, the principle of life was still strong within it, and he would keep it alive to act vigorously in better times. But since nothing

* Parliamentary History, vol. xvii. p. 675.

could be done at the moment with the slightest prospect of success, he resolved, as Christmas approached, and the House adjourned for the holidays, to withdraw himself for a month or two from a scene in which for him there was nothing but trouble and mortification.

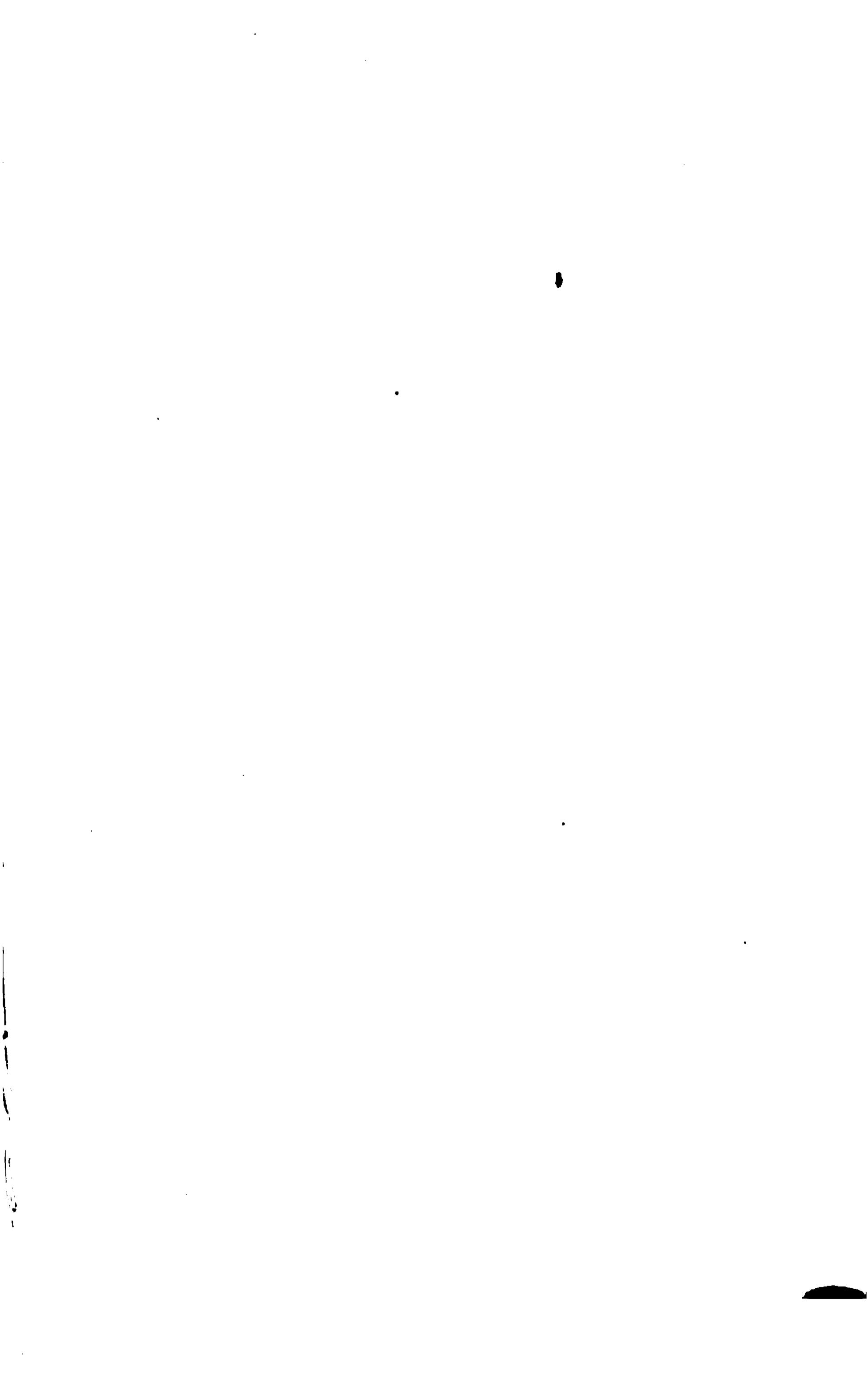
His son, after passing a very satisfactory examination, had matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford; but being still only in his sixteenth year, Dr. Markham had granted him leave of absence for twelve months. Burke determined to take him to France, that he might perfect himself in the language at a time of life when the tongue easily adapts itself to a foreign pronunciation. This accomplishment the father did not himself possess, and he always regretted the deficiency. Though he could only spend a few weeks in Paris, and was ready to leave as soon as ever Lord Rockingham should request his presence in London, this visit was one of the most important episodes in his anxious and busy existence.

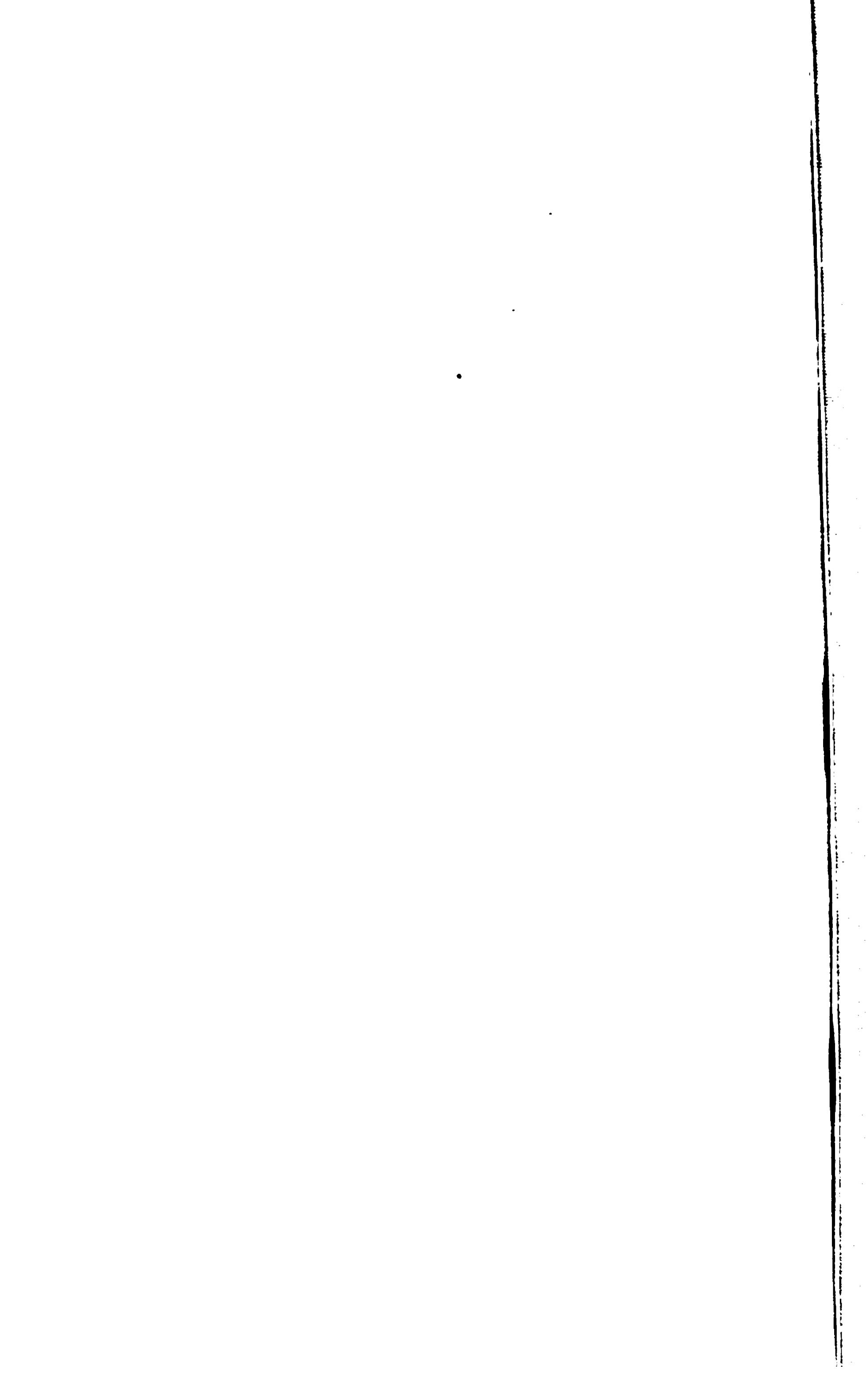
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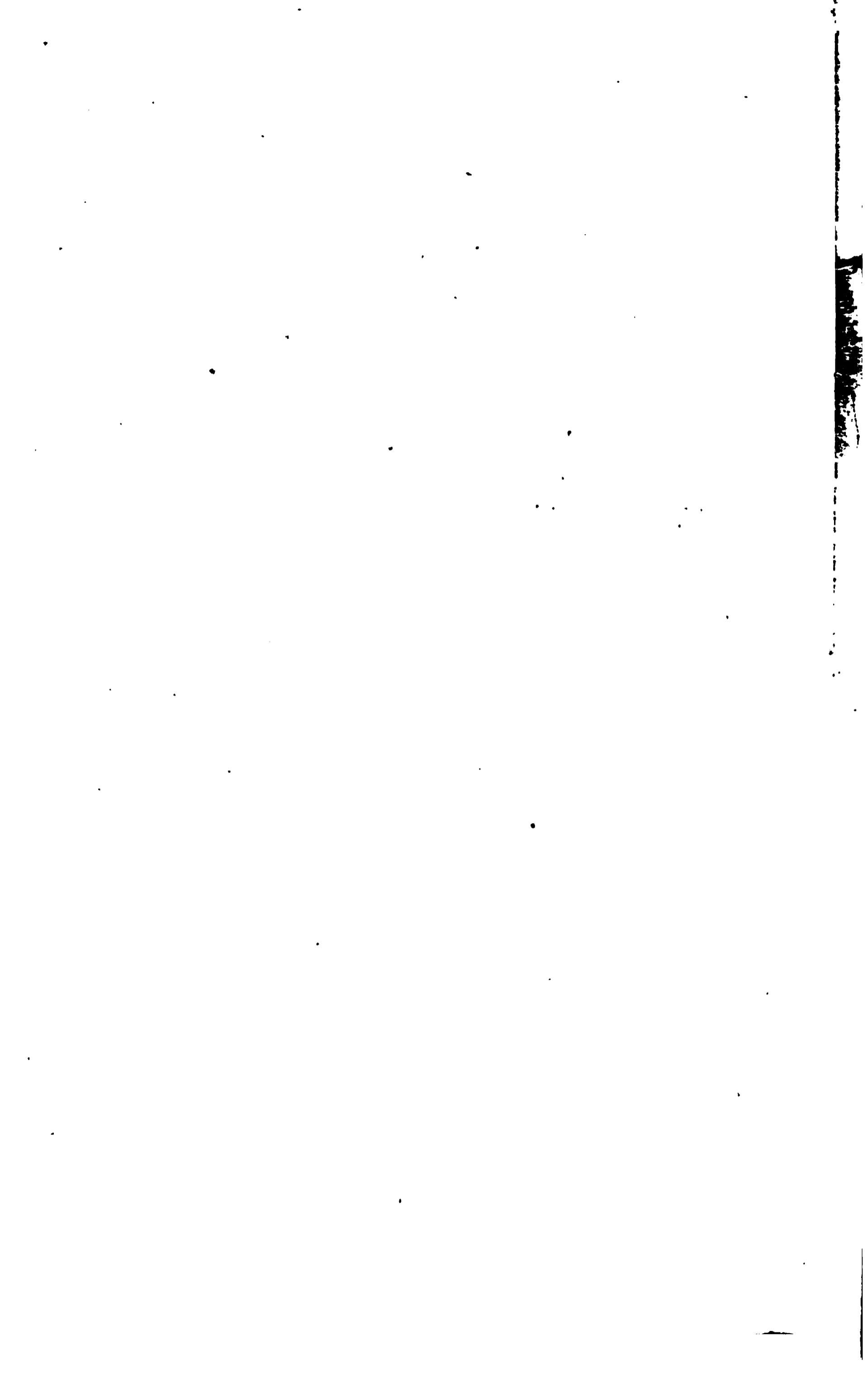
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JUL 25 1932



